

**Policy, Governance & Finance
Committee Meeting of Witney Town Council**



Monday, 22nd June, 2026 at 6.00 pm

To members of the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee - T Ashby, S Simpson, G Doughty, J Aitman, J Doughty, R Crouch and R Smith (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 [PGF Meeting 22.06.2026](#)

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. **Minutes** (Pages 4 - 12)

- a) To adopt and sign as a correct record the minutes of the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee meetings held on 30 March and 27 May 2026.
- b) Matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda (Questions on the progress of any item).

5. **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.

6. **Committee Terms of Reference** (Pages 13 - 15)

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

7. **Annual Resident's Survey 2026** (Pages 16 - 21)

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

Policy

8. **Litter Picking Policy** (Pages 22 - 27)

To receive and consider approval for a town council Litter picking Policy.

Governance

9. **Payment of Accounts**

To receive and consider the schedule of accounts paid and bank reconciliations from the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO). (to follow)

10. **Accounts & Audit (England) Regulations 2015 - Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) 2025-26** (Pages 28 - 45)

To receive and consider the report of the RFO to agree the Annual Governance statement.

In line with The Accounts & Audit (England) Regulations 2015. To receive and consider the Annual Governance & Accountability Return for 2025/26.

11. **Internal Audit 2026** (Pages 46 - 53)

To receive and consider the final report of the Internal Auditor for 2025/26.

Finance

12. **Finance Report**

To receive and consider the report of the R.F.O concerning the financial position of items under the remit of this Committee in 2026/27. (to follow).

13. **Financial Matters referred from Spending Committees** (Pages 54 - 59)

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

a) **Skate Park Fencing** (Pages 60 - 63)

To receive and consider the report of the Head of Estates & Operations.

14. **Grants & Subsidised Lettings**

To receive and consider the report of the Deputy Town Clerk (to follow).

15. **Exclusion of Press and 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

16. **Property, Legal & Insurance Matters** (Pages 64 - 73)

To receive and consider confidential updates reported by the Senior Management Team.

17. **Staffing Matters**

To receive the confidential minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee meetings held on 8 and 30 April 20: and agree any recommendations contained therein (sent under separate cover).



Town Clerk

Agenda Item 4

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

Held on Monday, 30 March 2026

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

Present:

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

Councillors:	J Doughty	D Enright (In place of R Smith)
	T Ashby	G Meadows (In place of R Crouch)
	G Doughty	D Newcombe (In place of A Bailey)

Officers:	Sharon Groth	Town Clerk
	Adam Clapton	Deputy Town Clerk
	Nigel Warner	Responsible Financial Officer

Others: 2 members of the public.

F157 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs A Bailey, R Crouch, R Smith for whom Cllrs D Newcombe, G Meadows and D Enright attended as substitutes respectively. A further apology was received from Cllr S Simpson.

F158 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

A personal, non -prejudicial declaration was made by Cllr D Newcombe due to his residence being in an area to be considered under Agenda Item 14.

There were no further declarations of interests from Members or officers at this juncture.

F159 MINUTES

The minutes of the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee meeting held on 2 February 2026 were received.

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee meeting held on 2 February 2026 be approved as correct records of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

F160 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Committee adjourned for this item.

The Committee received representations from Hanborough Cricket Club and Friends of Witney Community Primary School under agenda item 12.

The Committee reconvened.

The two Members of the Public left the meeting following their participation.

F161 **PROCUREMENT POLICY REVIEW**

The Committee received and considered an updated Procurement Policy for approval by the Council from the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO).

Members heard that the Council had procured heavily in the previous two years due to the level of high value works being undertaken by the Council. This two-yearly review ensured it was reflective of standard statutory regulations and complimented the Council's Financial Regulations and Standing Orders.

The RFO suggested good practice would be to consolidate all procurement details into one document for clarity and ease of use for Council employees. It was suggested this could be presented at the September meeting of this Committee.

Members welcomed the review and were pleased to note a section on utilising local suppliers where possible and therefore welcomed the updated document and endorsed the creation of one procurement document.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the revised Procurement Policy, as presented be agreed and adopted by Witney Town Council and,
3. That, the RFO creates a consolidated Procurement document for review at the Committee meeting scheduled for 28 September 2026.

Cllr T Ashby left the meeting briefly between 6.32 – 6.35pm

F162 **CORN EXCHANGE ART DISPLAY POLICY**

The Committee received and considered a Corn Exchange Art Display Policy for approval by the Council.

Cllr J Aitman declared an interest in this item as she hoped to display her art in the facility.

The policy had been recommended for approval by the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee at its meeting on 16 March 2026, subject to changes.

Members agreed with a recommended change for a 10% +VAT commission charge and welcomed the policy.

Resolved:

That, the Corn Exchange Art Display Policy, with the above amendment, be agreed and adopted by Witney Town Council and reviewed after six months.

F163 **PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS**

The Committee received the report of the Responsible Financial Officer with the accompanying payment schedules, bank statements and reconciliations for December 2025 and January 2026.

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 December 2025	£463,875.27	General CB 1
Cheques, DDs, BACs and Standing Orders December 2025	£13,257.24	Imprest CB 2
DDs, ELPs and Standing Orders January 2026	£596,706.83	General CB 1
Cheques, DDs and Standing Orders January 2026	£14,147.69	Imprest CB 2

F164 **INTERIM AUDIT REPORT**

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

Members were advised there were no issues to draw their attention to and the final year-end report would be received in June.

Resolved:

That, the internal Audit interim update for 2025/26 be welcomed and the whole team be thanked for their work and diligence.

F165 **EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNAL CONTROL: CORPORATE & FINANCIAL RISK ASSESSMENT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) who provided a verbal update to explain the need for a robust corporate risk assessment to be in place.

In accordance with its responsibility for the Council's governance and financial oversight in line with the Accounts & Audit Regulations 2015, the Committee considered an updated Risk Management Policy and Risk Assessment, comprising nine sections. An action plan was included at the end of the documents and compiled various risks, including malicious representation.

The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) proposed that, in future, this process be undertaken earlier in the year, suggesting September 2026 as the most appropriate timing, in advance of the annual budget-setting process.

Recommended:

1. That the report be noted and,
2. That, the Risk Management Policy & Corporate Risk Assessment for the financial year 2025-26 be endorsed and signed by the Chair and,
3. That, a future corporate risk assessment be considered at the September meeting on this Committee.

F166 **FINANCE REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) detailing income and expenditure for budgets which were the responsibility of the committee.

Members were advised work had taken place on making the costs centres more accurate and accurately reflective, on property budgets and VAT. It was noticeable that income and expenditure were higher for the final economic quarter due to the West Witney projects and the loan and payments tied therein, the bulk of the loan having to be drawn down by the end of the fiscal year.

The Committee also welcomed news that the Council's green energy contract had been renewed, and the Council had been relatively protected from recent changes as officers had accepted a quote prior to energy price rises.

Finally, it was confirmed the Council had continued membership of the Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils due to the support provided which would be especially useful with upcoming Local Government reorganisation.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the management accounts of the Committee's services to 31 December 2025 be approved and,
3. That, the endorsement of the actions of officers in agreeing the energy contract with 100 Green for the year commencing 1 April 2026 be noted and,
4. That, draw downs of two loans totalling £960,000 in relation to the West Witney Project borrowed from the Public Works Loan Board be noted and,
5. That, the endorsement of the renewal for the subscription to the Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils for the year commencing 1 April 2026 for the sum of £4,508 be noted and,
6. That, the report on investments to the period to 28 February 2026 be approved.

F167 **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.

Members noted the recommendation of the Parks & Recreation Committee to release agreed funding to Courtside Hubs for the Leys redevelopment project via delegation. Senior officers were inputting into this issue, and the funds would be released on the completion of project milestones.

Resolved:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, the recommendations of the spending Committees as detailed be approved.

Due to a previous role held with one of the grant applicants the Responsible Financial Officer left the meeting at this point, returning after the conclusion of the item.

F168 **GRANTS & SUBSIDISED LETTINGS**

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

Members considered each application in turn and noted that any awards would fall within the new financial year, as the 2025–26 budget had been fully expended. It was further noted that a number of organisations applied annually and that, while this may create an expectation of funding, the position was clearly set out within the Council’s Grants Criteria and Subsidised Lettings Policy.

In respect of subsidised lettings, the Committee recognised that the applicants delivered valuable arts and community services and therefore agreed to award these in full, including a reminder that an annual award could not be taken for granted. Full grant awards were also approved for Witney Shed and the annual grant to Witney Town Band in support of civic performances.

Applications from the Friends of Witney Community Primary School and Hanborough Cricket Club were initially deferred to the June meeting. The Committee considered that alternative funding sources may be available and that approving these requests at this stage could limit the Council’s ability to allocate discretionary grants later in the year. Applicants would be provided with further guidance on potential funding options.

The Committee acknowledged the admirable project from Hanborough Cricket Club and the potential wider benefit of the proposed project to some Witney residents; however, it was ultimately concluded that the request could not be justified for funding by Witney Town Council.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, Witney Photo Group (£266.67+VAT), Witney Food Revolution (£228.33+VAT), and Witney Town Training Band (£215.50+VAT) be awarded full subsidised letting of the Corn Exchange in the new fiscal year and,
3. That, Witney Shed be awarded a grant of £450 and,
4. That, Witney Town Band be awarded an annual grant of £750 and,
5. That, the grant application from the Friends of Witney Community Primary School be deferred until the June meeting of this Committee and,
6. That, no award be granted to Hanborough Cricket Club and,
7. That, these grants be awarded under the General Power of Competence and awardees be asked to acknowledge the Town Council in any promotional material.

F169 **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.

During the following item the Town Clerk left the meeting.

F170 **PROPERTY, LEGAL & INSURANCE MATTERS**

The Committee received and considered the confidential reports of the Town Clerk/C.E.O and Head of Estates & Operations.

The Committee firstly received an update from the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) on the Council's insurance procurement, including three quotations for the annual premium. The options presented were broadly comparable in cost. In response to a query regarding the ethical standing of the suppliers, Members were advised that, due to time constraints, a full assessment had not been undertaken however this could be considered in future, subject to the decision made. Members resolved to enter into a three-year agreement with Contractor C, as identified in the report.

The Committee also received an update from the Head of Estates & Operations regarding ongoing negotiations with West Witney Sports & Social Club, including a range of potential leasing options. It was agreed that a decision could not be made at this stage pending further financial and forward-planning information.

Heads of Terms for the transfer and project management of the Springfield Oval Play Area/Open Space were considered and approved and, the Committee further noted correspondence from West Oxfordshire District Council in relation to a planning enforcement matter.

Resolved:

1. That, the confidential reports and updates be noted and,
2. That, the insurance quote from Contractor C in the report be approved on a three-year deal for the sum of £42,574 per annum and,
3. That, further accounting and future business information is requested from West Witney Sports & Social Club and,
4. That, Witney Town Council approves the Heads of Terms and therefore, the transfer and project management of the Springfield Oval Play Area/Open Space, subject to final legal documentation.

F171 **SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 5(W)**

Resolved:

That, Standing Order 5(w) be suspended to allow the meeting to continue as it had lasted for two hours.

F172 **THE STATION - DRAFT SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT 2026-2029**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk and accompanying draft Service Level Agreement (SLA) with Bright Futures Oxfordshire for a detached Youth Service, The Station in Witney.

The SLA incorporated amendments as previously agreed by the delegated Members and officers tasked with progressing the matter. At the time of the meeting, a response from Bright Futures had not yet been received.

The Committee approved the proposed amendments on behalf of the Council and reaffirmed the existing delegation to enable the matter to be concluded expediently.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the Council amendments to the Service Level Agreement with Bright Futures Oxfordshire be approved and,
3. That, delegation to conclude the negotiations on this matter be re-affirmed to the Deputy Town Clerk, Cllr R Smith, Cllr T Ashby and Cllr R Crouch.

Cllrs D Enright & G Meadows left the meeting ahead of the next item as they were not members of the Personnel Sub-Committee.

F173 **STAFFING MATTERS**

The Committee received the minutes of the Personnel Sub Committee meeting held on 25th March 2026 and a verbal update from the Deputy Town Clerk. The minutes of the meeting held on 24th February had been circulated prior to this meeting.

Resolved:

That, the confidential minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee meetings held on 24th February and 25th March 2026, and the recommendations contained therein be approved.

The meeting closed at: 8.17 pm

Chair

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

Held on Wednesday, 27 May 2026

At 6.00 pm in the Main Hall, The Corn Exchange, Witney

Present:

Councillor R Smith (Chair)

Councillors:	J Doughty S Simpson T Ashby	G Doughty R Crouch
Officers:	Adam Clapton Mark Lewis	Deputy Town Clerk Head of Estates & Operations
Others:	None.	

F258 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Cllr J Aitman.

F259 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members.

F260 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.

F261 PROPERTY & LEGAL MATTERS

The Committee received and considered the confidential report of the Head of Estates and Operations concerning lease terms for the tenant at West Witney Sports Ground Clubhouse.

Members welcomed the report, noting the proposed interim arrangements following completion of the facility refurbishment as well as the potential options and Council expectations for future discussions.

Resolved:

1. That, the confidential report be noted and,

2. That, the interim tenancy arrangements with West Witney Sports & Social Club be approved for a period up to 1 January 2027 while further negotiations take place.

The meeting closed at: 6.26 pm

Chair

POLICY, GOVERNANCE & FINANCE COMMITTEE



Agenda Item:	Terms of Reference
Meeting Date:	Monday, 22 nd June 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 (ACM) 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:

Overall Purpose

To ensure that the Council's finances, staffing, statutory obligations, and governance are managed effectively and in accordance with legal and regulatory requirements, while supporting the strategic direction and service delivery of the Council.

1. Policy

- a) To consider, keep under review and make recommendations to the Council as appropriate:
 - The Council's strategic objectives and priorities.
 - All major issues of national and local policy affecting the town, including new government legislation.
 - Council policies.
 - The development of existing and introduction of new services, including grounds maintenance.
 - Relationships with West Oxfordshire District Council, Oxfordshire County Council, other public bodies, and outside organisations.
- b) To consider the resources available to meet the Council's objectives in terms of land, property, finance, and manpower and to advise other committees and the Council as required.
- c) Within all decision-making, ensure that the green environment and biodiversity of public open spaces is protected and enhanced in line with the Council's Climate Emergency aspirations.
- d) To oversee and ensure social value outcomes are considered in policy development.

2. Governance

- e) Oversee Council administration, legal compliance, and be responsible to the Council for reviewing the effectiveness and efficiency of all services.
- f) Review and monitor:
 - Council corporate and financial risk register, insurance, and legal matters.
 - Data protection, FOI, and related statutory duties.
 - Committee structures and delegated responsibilities.
 - Banking arrangements
- g) To consider community governance matters including elections and electoral arrangements, town boundaries, and the impact of future changes to Local Government structure and devolution.
- h) Overall management of Council assets (including land), records, and operational premises (including those under other committees).
- i) To oversee and approve tendering and purchasing arrangements ensuring compliance with the Council's Financial Regulations and Procurement Act 2023.
- j) Provide oversight of contracts, major capital projects and investment properties including those leased to the Council.
- k) Hold overall responsibility for employment matters via the personnel sub-committee.
- l) Consider matters affecting Members, including Member allowances (if appropriate) and the annual calendar of meetings.
- m) To receive reports from the internal and external auditors, review actions required and ensure effective internal controls.
- n) To appoint the Council's independent Internal Auditor.

3. Finance

- o) Oversee the Council's finances (including investments), ensuring legal and regulatory compliance
- p) Prepare and recommend the annual budget and precept for approval by Council.
- q) Review and approve:
 - Estimates of income and expenditure from all committees.
 - Fees, charges, and funding levels.
 - Annual Governance & Accountability Return, and financial statements.
- r) To consider and approve grant applications in accordance with adopted policy, and to recommend larger or exceptional grants to Full Council
- s) To act as the Council's Audit Committee and to
 - Review and authorise Council payments in accordance with Financial Regulations.
 - Monitor budgeted vs actual income/expenditure.
 - Act as a financial scrutiny panel.
- t) Approve or recommend additional expenditure beyond approved limits.
- u) Maintain oversight of financial systems, controls, and reporting.
- v) To develop and monitor the Council's Medium-Term Financial Plan and Capital Programme

Committee Membership & Quorum

- 6 Councillors (made up of the Chairs of the standing Committees) plus the Leader and Town Mayor (ex officio).
- Quorum: 4 Members.
- The Committee may make recommendations to Full Council on any matter within its remit.

It was further agreed at the Annual Council Meeting that the Terms of Reference of the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee, Personnel Sub-Committee, and the Disciplinary & Grievance Panel should be reviewed to ensure consistency and alignment in relation to staffing and human resources matters (Minute No. 228 refers).

Due to time constraints, it has not been possible to complete a review of term (k) prior to this meeting. The Committee is therefore requested to consider whether it wishes to make any amendments to the remaining Terms of Reference for the current municipal year and defer consideration of term (k) to a future meeting to allow sufficient time for the review.

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:

1. A Forward Looking Town Council

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 – As the Committee with oversight on policy and employment matters, the Committee are reminded that Council decisions are subject to relevant legislation.
- 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. 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 recommend such changes be made to Full Council on 13th July 2026.



POLICY, GOVERNANCE & FINANCE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item:	Annual Resident's Survey 2026
Meeting Date:	Monday, 22 June 2026
Contact Officer:	Deputy Town Clerk (Administrative Support Assistant – Communities & Engagement)

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; 344 responses were received in total.

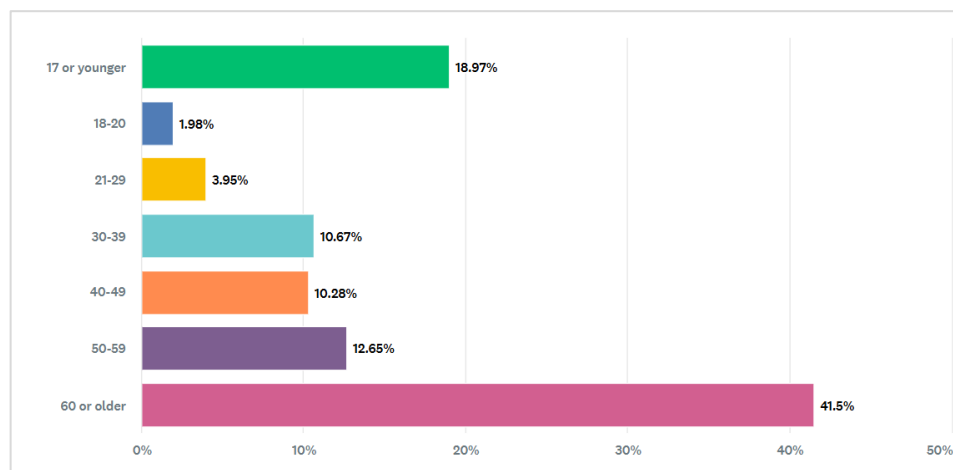
While the number of responses is a very small percentage of the population, the results are still an important resource in advising the Council in which areas projects, communications, and future spending should be considered.

Current Situation

All Council Standing Committees have received reports outlining the scores and comments for services under their remit during the current meeting cycle.

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



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

The combined percentage figure gives an overall satisfactory/good/excellent scoring for each service.

Service	Year	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	% comb	Poor	n/a	Resp
Recreation Grounds/Play Areas/Open Spaces	2026	10.5% (28)	31.5% (86)	26.5% (72)	68.50%	20% (54)	11.5% (31)	271
	2025	8.5% (29)	38% (131)	28% (96)	74.50%	11% (37)	14.5% (49)	342
	2024	7.5% (33)	48% (207)	19% (82)	74.50%	10.5% (45)	15% (65)	432
The Leys Splash & Adventure Parks	2026	11% (30)	23.5% (62)	18.5% (66)	53.00%	5% (14)	41.5% (66)	270
	2025	6.5% (22)	23.5% (81)	18% (62)	48.00%	16.5% (56)	35.5% (121)	342
	2024	11% (48)	27% (117)	20% (87)	58.00%	11.0% (48)	31% (134)	434
Cemeteries	2026	8% (21)	22% (60)	9.5% (25)	39.50%	15% (41)	45.5% (123)	270
	2025	12% (40)	28% (95)	18% (61)	58.00%	6% (21)	36% (124)	341
	2024	13% (57)	36% (156)	15.5% (67)	64.50%	5.5% (24)	30% (129)	433
Public Halls Corn Exchange	2026	21% (57)	24% (57)	11% (29)	56.00%	25% (67)	19.5% (52)	269
	2025	22.5% (77)	29% (97)	16% (55)	67.50%	3.5% (12)	29% (99)	340
	2024	18% (77)	31% (135)	16% (69)	65.00%	4.5% (20)	30.5% (133)	434
Public Halls Burwell Hall	2026	4% (11)	10.5% (28)	10% (27)	24.50%	8.5% (23)	67% (179)	268
	2025	6% (20)	16% (54)	13% (45)	35.00%	4.5% (15)	60.5% (207)	341
	2024	5.5% (23)	22% (96)	13.5% (58)	41.00%	3.5% (15)	55.5% (242)	434
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)	80.00%	8.5% (29)	11.5% (39)	341
	2024	21.5% (92)	35.5% (153)	24.5% (107)	81.50%	9% (40)	9.5% (42)	434
Street Furniture (bins/benches/bus shelters)	2026	19.5% (52)	33.5% (90)	25.5% (68)	78.50%	21% (56)	1% (3)	269
	2025	12% (42)	29.5% (100)	34% (116)	75.50%	21% (71)	3.5% (12)	341
	2024	7.5% (32)	36.5% (158)	32.5% (141)	76.50%	19.5% (84)	4% (17)	432
Christmas Lights Display	2026	38.5% (104)	30.5% (83)	11.5% (31)	80.50%	16.5% (45)	2.5% (7)	270
	2025	36.5% (125)	37% (126)	16.5% (56)	90.00%	7% (24)	3% (10)	341
	2024	33.5% (146)	36.5% (160)	16.5% (72)	86.50%	10% (43)	3.5% (16)	437
Civic Events (e.g. Remembrance & Mayor's Carols)	2026	23.5% (64)	30% (81)	11% (30)	64.50%	3% (8)	32% (87)	270
	2025	21% (71)	32% (110)	16.5% (56)	69.50%	5.5% (18)	25% (86)	341
	2024	16.5% (72)	34% (149)	19% (83)	69.50%	4.5% (19)	26% (112)	435
Community Events (e.g. Play Days, coffee mornings)	2026	8% (21)	18.5% (49)	8.5% (23)	35.00%	4% (11)	61% (164)	268
	2025	5.5% (19)	18% (62)	14% (47)	37.50%	7.5% (26)	55% (186)	340
	2024	8.5% (36)	22.5% (98)	13.5% (60)	44.50%	8% (34)	47.5% (208)	436
Communication	2026	6.5% (18)	23% (62)	39.5% (105)	69.00%	18% (48)	12.5% (34)	267
	2025	8% (28)	28% (94)	25.5% (87)	61.50%	22.5% (76)	16% (54)	339
	2024	8% (35)	35% (149)	27% (116)	70.00%	16% (68)	14% (60)	428
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)	69.50%	7.5% (25)	23% (80)	343
	2024	12.5% (54)	34.5% (150)	22.5% (99)	69.50%	6% (27)	24.5% (106)	436

Comments

As the Committee with overall financial and policy-making powers, the remainder of the comments include general comments about the town council, its services and those relating to other organisations. These can be seen below:

- “Potholes need sorting”
- “Great”
- “There are lots of potholes which damage the car's suspension.”
- “Mid place”
- “Lots of litter around but still beautiful sites to be in.”
- “Nice town People need to pick up their dog poo more, this could be a more prominent issue in the future”
- “Everything costs far too much for an area which has the highest youth mental health numbers in England. I know of non-profits that want to do World changing work in the area(UK Paradigm) and they cannot afford statutory prices set to do the work that will fix everything..”
- “The council is one of the best managed and run councils in the country with dedicated competent professional officers serving the community.”
- “I think Witney Town Council does an outstanding job with the thing it has jurisdiction for. I wish you had more influence over WODC.”
- “The slow decline in standards of council services becomes more visible each year, but the rates keep going up!”
- “Too expensive. Too many pen pushers.”
- “Please stop hiking up my council tax - I’m not seeing any improvements in services.”
- “The council need to do less, but do it better. Less spent trying to entertain us & more spent on the basics. It might be boring, but that's your job!”
- “Why is the council spending £13,000 on a music festival? There is little benefit to Witney residents. If it weren't subsidised, it would still go ahead, with tickets costing just a pound or two more. Why should the small number of Witney residents who attend get such a large subsidy from the majority, who don't? Why are Witney ratepayers subsidising tickets for non-residents from all over the country? Any extra business for local pubs or hotels is of no benefit to the Town Council, as businesses don't pay council tax. This unnecessary extravagance needs to stop, with the money spent on keeping the town clean & tidy instead, for the benefit of us ALL.”

The following comments are concerned with services provided by West Oxfordshire District Council.

- “Car parking - currently very good. Recent reports about building on Woodford Way car park is crazy!! If you want to encourage people into the towns we need all car parks that we have plus more - considering new builds as well. Leave the car parks alone.”
- “Do not take the car park away for housing please.”

- “I strongly object to the WODC building displaying the rainbow flag. It's outrageous for the council to have ideological biases.”
- “Do not build on Woodford Way Carpark. We need the car park. Need more bins.”
- “Need more bins in the town centre”
- “We really do need more bins.”
- “Grass cutting for my area extremely poor. Market here improve recently.”
- “There is too much litter around Witney it spoils the town. More litter bins would keep more awareness of regularly litter”
- “Litter never gets collected from side streets. Many of the bins and street furniture are covered in old adverts and are dilapidated.
- “We need more bins in witney - where have they all gone? Woodford way car park must remain, it's where most of my colleagues park for work.”
- “Need a Nando’s in Marriott’s please.”
- “I've noticed there's a lot of rubbish around especially when walking down past The Leys past that Gym (can't remember the name) seem to be cups from McDonalds etc. Thanks to voluntary litter pickers who recently picked up litter on Burford Rd.”
- “Never enough bins in and around areas that need them and then need emptying. Greenspace is badly maintained.”

The following comments are concerned with services provided by Oxfordshire County Council.

- “Far too many obstacles on the pavements.”
- “I am anxious to try and walk on the very broken state of Witney pavements. I have sight and mobility problems and avoid witney sadly.”
- “I do hope the proposed cameras are installed on Market Hill, because my husband (who is disabled + has a blue badge) is unable to park near his bank.”
- “Standard of road is so poor.”
- “The potholes in Witney are awful. Many tires burst from massive holes you can’t avoid. Please fix the roads.”
- “State of paths and roads are appalling”
- “I understand why you have banned most traffic from the High Street but that ban impairs businesses and makes it harder for me to drop my wife off. She has disabilities.”
- “Too many obstructions on the pavements make it hard to walk.”

- “Potholes Junction Woodford Wat / Welch Way diabolical Others too numerous to mention.”
- “More information on things to be done like roads, potholes, car parking, waste, tips.”
- “Please open the High Street.”
- “Too many different councils, very confusing on who does what.”
- “Witney is a lovely town but the potholes situation is abysmal. There are huge, dangerous potholes right in the town centre and they never seem to get repaired, only get worse.”
- “We desperately need the High Street to be open to all traffic again to bring it back to life. It isn't properly pedestrianised anyway and I still find myself dodging buses & the takeaway drivers who ignore the 'No Entry' signs on the marketplace. What's the point?”

The following comments are concerned with policing, and anti-social behaviour.

- “Too many hooligans on bikes & drug dealers on the Leys. I have even seen them in school uniform at 4 PM!”
- “Can something be done about the dogs running loose on the Leys? When I was young, there were signs saying 'no cycling' & 'dogs must be kept on a lead', but these have all gone now & it is a free-for-all. Not to mention the electric Deliveroo bikes bombing across there in the dark between Sainsbury's & McDonald's. It would be nice to sit and watch a game of cricket, on a peaceful summer's afternoon, again, without these menaces.”
- “Dangerous cycling on the leys & around the lake.”
- “Deer Park playground is often damaged/neglected by youths/young adults and sometimes unusable due to broken glass, anti-social behaviour and flooding.”

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.



Policy Document

Litter Picking Policy

1. Introduction

1.1. This should be read in conjunction with the Witney Town Council Volunteer Policy.

1.2. The aim of the litter picking scheme is:

To improve and maintain the quality of Witney's environment and keep the town free of litter whilst complying with the relevant legislation and insurance requirements and ensuring the health and safety of litter picking volunteers.

1.3 The Town Council will maintain a record of Volunteers, equipment and safety instructions that have been provided and where and when they intend to litter pick. This will be reviewed on an annual basis when litter picking equipment is recalled for checking.

2. Health and Safety Measures for Volunteers

(Also see the Town Council Health and safety Policy) Appendix 2

2.1. Volunteers must be over 18 years of age. If parents or group leaders wish to litter pick with children, then it is at their own risk, and the children should be always supervised by an adult. Litter pickers will not be provided for those under the age of 18 years where the above is not applicable.

2.2. Volunteers will be provided with a safety instruction sheet and risk assessment and will be asked to sign to acknowledge that they have read and understood the information.

2.3 Volunteers will be provided with the appropriate equipment and instructions (where appropriate) for its use: Hi Viz jacket, Safety Gloves and a Litter Picker.

2.4. Equipment will be recalled annually for checking by the Town Office and any damaged/worn items replaced.

2.5. Volunteers should return any items that become damaged/worn to the Town Office as necessary and a replacement will be provided.

2.6. Volunteers must inform the Town Hall Office of the times and locations they will be undertaking litter picking. This can be done at the time of registering for regular litter picking, however the Office must be informed of any additional litter picking prior to it being undertaken. If the Town Office is not notified in advance of the litter picking

activity and the times and locations approved, the volunteer will not be covered by Town Council Insurance.

3. Litter Picking Areas

3.1. Litter picking areas will be assessed regularly to ensure the safety of volunteers.

3.2. The Town Council will not endorse, support or insure litter picking activities taking place on roads of 40mph or above, or roads where there is no pavement or verge wide enough to provide a safe distance from traffic.

3.3. An annual audit will be conducted to produce/update a map of areas covered by the Volunteer Litter Pickers.

3.4. New volunteers may be requested to litter pick in any areas or at times not already covered by a volunteer(s).

Volunteer Litter Picking Scheme - Safety Instructions for Volunteers

Before you begin/continue as a volunteer picker please make sure that you have read a copy of the risk assessment and that you have read and signed the safety instructions below.

You must inform the Town Office of the times and locations that you will be litter picking. This can be done at the time of registering for regular litter picking, however the Office must be informed of any additional litter picking prior to it being undertaken. If the Town Office is not notified in advance of the litter picking activity and has not approved the times and locations, you will not be covered by Town Council Insurance.

Protective Clothing and Equipment •

Wear suitable footwear and clothing for weather conditions. Footwear should not be open toed and should be suitable for uneven/unstable ground and to withstand standing on sharp items. Arms should be covered.

- Wear gloves and a reflective jacket/waistcoat – These will be provided by the Town Council.
- Use the litter pickers provided.

Dangerous Materials

Do not touch or move anything that may be dangerous including:

- Broken Glass or other sharp items.
- Drug Related Litter, syringes or needles.
- Unidentified substances, containers or liquids.
- Anything suspected to contain asbestos.
- Large, heavy items.
- Any other potentially hazardous items, including human waste, animal waste or blood. Suspected fly tipping. Please report any dangerous items or fly tipping to: West Oxfordshire District Council at the following link:
https://community.westoxon.gov.uk/s/flow/Web_Form_Fly_Tipping?flowArgument_s=%5B%7B%22label%22%3A%22vClientCode%22%2C%22dataType%22%3A%22String%22%2C%22value%22%3A%22WOD%22%7D%5D&flowTitle=Report%20a%20Fly-tip

Disposal of Waste

DRAFT

Please dispose of waste in the local bins provided, with your weekly collection or in the Town Council waste bin by prior arrangement with the Town Council Office. Tel: 01993 704379.

Volunteers must read and adhere to the risk assessment and safety advice provided by the Town Council.

In the event of an Accident/Injury

Injuries sustained whilst litter picking on behalf of the Town Council should be reported to the **Town Council Office and recorded in the Accident Book.**

Disclaimer

Volunteers litter picking do so at their own risk. Witney Town Council will not be held responsible for any loss, damage or inconvenience caused because of the actions and omissions of volunteers or this guidance. Members of the public using their own equipment do so at their own risk and will not be covered by Town Council Insurance.

I confirm that I will always act responsibly and safely and observe the safety brief and risk assessment given by the Town Council Staff.

Full Name:

Signature:

Date:

Appendix 2

DRAFT

Witney Town Council Health and Safety Policy Statement

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.

The overall objective of our Health and Safety Policy and management system is to minimise the number of instances of occupational accidents and illnesses and ultimately to reduce them to zero. We endeavour to do all that is reasonably practicable to ensure the health and safety of our employees. However, health and safety at work is the responsibility of each and every individual associated with our business and all employees are required to be constantly vigilant and concerned for the welfare of themselves and others.

It is the duty of each employee to take reasonable care of his or her own safety and welfare and to report any situation, which may pose a threat to the wellbeing of themselves or any other person. Hazards in the workplace must be reported as a matter of routine and no member of staff will be penalised for complaining to management or a designated Safety Officer if hazards are not addressed in a timely manner. It is every workers' responsibility to report immediately any situation that could endanger the wellbeing of themselves or others and to ensure that the reporting of injuries sustained by a person at work, however small, never goes unrecorded. Accident records are crucial to the effective monitoring and revision of our policy and must therefore be accurate and detailed.

Witney Town Council believes that the success of our Health and Safety Policy can only be achieved through the cooperation of all personnel. Experienced employees must support and assist inexperienced and young employees by not allowing them to unknowingly put their health and safety at risk. An inexperienced, untrained or young worker must not attempt to do hazardous work if they do not feel competent or have not been trained for that work. If any inexperienced or untrained worker is in any doubt about his or her competence in carrying out a work activity, they must immediately stop doing the work and inform their supervisor or Safety Officer. Employees will be provided with the required equipment, information, training and supervision required to do their job in accordance with our Health and Safety Policy.

Witney Town Council Health and Safety Policy is regularly monitored and improvements to the Policy will be implemented as necessary. We invite all employees to put forward suggestions for improvements regarding the Health and Safety Policy either informally or in writing directly to the designated Safety Officer.

Name	Position	Signature	Date
Sharon Groth	Town Clerk/CEO		

DRAFT

The person responsible for the overall Health and Safety Policy at Witney Town Council is:

Name	Position	Address for correspondence
Sharon Groth	Town Clerk	Town Hall, Market Square, Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 6AG

The Designated Health & Safety Coordinator is:

Name	Position	Address for correspondence
Mark Lewis	Head of Estates and Operations	Town Hall, Market Square, Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 6AG

The Appointed Health & Safety Competent Person is:

Name	Position	Address for correspondence
Matthew Probitts	H&S Advisor	Opus Safety Ltd. 1 st Floor, 2 Chamberlin Square, Birmingham B3 3AX

Adopted: xxxx Committee. Minute no:

Review Date:

POLICY, GOVERNANCE & FINANCE COMMITTEE



Agenda Item: Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2025/26.

Meeting Date: Monday, 22 June 2026.

Contact Officer: Responsible Financial Officer.

The purpose of this report is to consider the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2025/26 and explain what the Council is required to do in order to approve the AGAR.

Background

The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 require relevant bodies to complete an Annual Return which is attached at Appendix A. The Annual Return must be submitted to the external auditors by the 30 June having been approved by full council before that date.

Current Situation

The form comprises a number of pages and these are detailed below.

Pages 1 and 2 – guidance notes and checklist

These comprise guidance notes and a checklist for the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO to complete before submission to the External Auditor).

Page 3 – Internal Audit Report 2025/26

This is the statutory report completed by the Internal Auditor. Throughout the year Auditing Solutions Ltd, the Council's independent Internal Auditors have carried out a number of visits and also undertaken some work remotely, in order to scrutinise internal procedures and accounting.

The Internal Auditor, Adrian Shepherd-Roberts of Auditing Solutions has carried out the final audit work for the year, and he has completed page 3 of the Annual Return.

This should be taken into consideration when Members consider the Annual Governance Statement.

As detailed above the report included in the AGAR is in a statutory format. The full Internal Audit Report is at a separate agenda item.

Page 4 – Section 1- Annual Governance Statement 2025/26

This is the document where Members consider the system of internal control including arrangements for the preparation of the Accounting Statements.

It is a statutory requirement that Members take responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control in place for the Council and give answers to ten questions in 'Section 1 – Annual governance statement'.

The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) has prepared the following notes to assist Council's consideration of the Annual Governance Statement. Council is required to answer 'Yes' or 'No' to each of the statements 1 to 9 below. In the event of a 'No' response, explanations must be provided to the external auditor together with a description of the action that is being taken to address the weakness identified.

The RFO considers that Members should answer Yes to questions 1 to 8 and 10 and not applicable to question 9;

Statement 1: We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.

[Yes means prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations]

[A] **Statement of Accounts.** Arrangements are in place to enable the preparation of an accurate and timely statement of accounts detailed in section 2 of the annual return.

These have been produced and certified by the Council's Responsible Financial Officer. They have been prepared in accordance with proper practices and in particular with reference to the Smaller Authorities Proper Practices Panel "Practitioners' Guide 2025 – Governance and accountability for smaller authorities in England" ("the Guide"). This is jointly published by the National Association of Local Councils, the Society of Local Councils and the Association of Drainage Authorities" to support the preparation by smaller authorities in England of the statutory annual accounting and governance statements which are part of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return.

In accordance with Section 6 of the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, an authority is a 'smaller authority' if the higher of the authority's gross income for the year and its gross expenditure for the year does not exceed £6,500,000. This is the case for Witney Town Council.

[B] **Budget estimates.** In accordance with relevant legislation, the Council prepares and approves a budget in a timely manner before setting its precept. The Council monitors its budget during the year through regular reports to the Council's committees, taking corrective action where necessary.

- [C] **Accounting records and supporting documents** – The Council has appointed an officer to be responsible for the financial administration of the authority in accordance with Section 151 of the Local Government Act 1972. The Council needs to have satisfied itself that its Responsible Finance Officer (RFO) has determined a system of financial controls and discharged their duties under Regulation 4 of the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. The RFO has maintained effective procedures to accurately and promptly record all financial transactions and maintained up to date accounting records throughout the year, together with all necessary supporting information. The accounting statements in Section 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return agree to the underlying records.
- [D] **Bank reconciliations**- Statements reconciling the Council’s three bank accounts with its accounting records are prepared on a regular basis, including at the financial year-end and reviewed by the Council at each meeting of the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee.
- [E] **Investments** - Arrangements are in place to ensure that the authority’s funds are managed properly and that any amounts surplus to requirements are invested appropriately, in accordance with the annual agreed Investment Strategy, which itself has regard to the government’s Statutory Guidance on Local Government Investments.
- [F] **Reserves** - The Council has a policy that the General Reserve has a minimum balance of three months’ budgeted net revenue expenditure and reviews the level and purpose of Earmarked Reserves on an annual basis as part of its budget making process.

Statement 2: We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.

[Yes means: made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge]

[A] **Internal control.** The Council’s system of internal control is designed to manage risk to a reasonable level.

As Members you are all monitoring the Council’s Internal Control mechanisms by attending Committee and Council meetings when regular management and financial information is provided, covering items including:

- Service delivery and project performance;
- Financial reports measuring actual expenditure against budgets;
- Comprehensive budget cycle.

Key elements of the internal control environment include:

- Internal Audit. This is independent and outsourced to Auditing Solutions Ltd as a competent provider of these services. There is a separate report recommending

the appointment of Auditing Solutions for the year commencing 2026-27 and that a re-tendering exercise takes place during 2026-27 for a new contract for Internal Audit services to commence on 1 April 2027.

- The Council adopted an updated 'Model Code of Conduct' on 10th October 2022 (minute 528). Following the May 2023 ordinary elections, the new administration adopted the Code at its Annual Meeting on 17th May 2023 (minute 245), and this is then reviewed annually.
- Standing Orders & Financial Regulations in place and regularly reviewed.
- The Council adopted an Annual Investment Strategy for 2004/05 on 5 May 2004 (minute 170/04 refers), which has been reviewed annually since, the latest review being on 17 February 2025 (minute 108).
- This Committee adopted a formal Risk Management Policy and programme for 2005/06 on 4 April 2005 (minute F142 refers); this has since been reviewed regularly. The policy is presented annually for approval, the latest review being for 2025/26 on 30 March 2026 (minute F165).
- Operational Risk Assessments have been presented to Council as and when they arise. The Corporate Risk Assessments and Risk Register was presented and adopted by this Committee on 30 March 2026. These Risk Assessments focus on the safety of the Council's assets, particularly money.

The risk register comprises nine sections:

- Financial administration.
 - Banking and investments.
 - Expenditure.
 - Grants.
 - Income.
 - Insurance.
 - Payroll.
 - Internal audit.
 - Strategic risks.
-
- The Council's book-keeping and accountancy is undertaken in-house by the Responsible Financial Officer (30 hours per week), the Administrative Support Assistant - Policy, Governance & Finance (25 hrs. per week) and the Finance Apprentice (full-time including attendance at college).
Financial procedures have been designed to allow for appropriate segregation of duties and to support and strengthen other internal controls.

[B] **Bank accounts** - The Council approves the setting up of, and any changes to, accounts with banks or other financial institutions including associated mandates.

- [C] **Employment** – Salaries and wages paid to all employees are approved in advance by the Council. The Council has in place robust payroll arrangements, and the Council complies with its duties under employment legislation and has met its pension obligations.
- [D] **VAT** - The Council has proper arrangements in place for handling its responsibilities regarding VAT.
- [E] **Loans**- loans are only entered into once the Council is satisfied that they can be afforded and that relevant approvals have been obtained. Proper arrangements are in place to ensure that funds are available to make repayments of capital and any associated interest and other liabilities.
- [F] **Fixed assets** and equipment – the Council has arrangements to ensure that the Council’s assets are secured, properly maintained and managed efficiently.

Statement 3: We took all reasonable steps to assure ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.

[Yes means: has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so]

- [A] **Powers**- The Town Clerk and Internal Auditor continually review legislative processes to ensure that the Council has the powers to undertake actions and that it complies with regulations and proper practices. Corrective action is taken as necessary. Standing orders and Financial Regulations are in place.

The Council has the Power of General Competence (March 2016) which was reaffirmed at the Annual Council meeting on 17 May 2023 following the ordinary elections.

Statement 4: We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors’ rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.

[yes means.... during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority’s accounts]

- [A] **Electors rights** - Compliance with year-end statutory requirements is prompted and monitored by the external auditors. Annual Reports including Financial Statements are available for inspection throughout the year. Financial information is also available on the Council’s website. For information the draft notice advertising electors’ rights for 2025/26 is attached as appendix B.

[B] **External Auditor's Review** – The notice of the conclusion of the external auditor's limited assurance review of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return for 2024-25, together with relevant accompanying information, was published on the Council's website and in its noticeboard on 26 September 2025 in accordance with the legislative requirements. It was also considered by the Full Council meeting which took place on 6 October 2025.

Statement 5: We carried out an assessment of the risks facing the council and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required

[Yes means: considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly]

[A] **Risks** - Your officers maintain a register in Word for corporate and financial purposes. This identifies and prioritises risks facing the council in relation to its actions and decisions. Reports detailing actions taken and persons responsible are reviewed annually by council. The Internal Auditor also independently reviews the effectiveness of actions and controls. A comprehensive insurance policy is in place through Zurich Municipal.

Statement 6: We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the council accounting records and control systems.

[Yes means: arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority]

[A] **Internal audit** - The internal auditor is appointed by council every five years and is an independent and competent person employed by [Auditing Solutions](#)

The Internal Auditor undertakes reports throughout the year with the resultant internal audit report reviewed by the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee. The contract was due for re-tender in 2025; it is now proposed that this exercise takes place in 2026 for a new contract from 1 April 2025. There is a separate report to the Committee in this regard.

Statement 7: We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.

[Yes means: responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit]

[A] Management responses and actions taken are recorded as part of the annual audit reports from internal and external auditors which are reviewed by council.

Statement 8: We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.

[Yes means.... disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant]

[A] The Town Clerk and the RFO review and accrue for any material known or contingent liabilities at the year-end.

Statement 9: Trust funds including charitable. In our capacity as the sole managing trustee, we have discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/assets, including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.

[A] Not applicable.

Statement 10: We have put in place arrangements for the effective IT and data management in accordance with proper practices during the year under review.

This has been added to the AGAR this year to clarify data compliance, this having previously been covered under Assertion 3. A report from the Deputy Town Clerk was submitted to this Committee on 22 September 2025 (minute F553). This outlined the requirements and confirmed that the Council was compliant in relation to this matter.

[Yes means proper arrangements are in place for effective IT and data management].

[A] **Email management** – the Council has a generic email account hosted on an authority owned domain.

[B] **Websites – legal requirements** - The Council meets legal requirements for its two websites, www.witney-tc.gov.uk and www.witneycornexchange.org.uk

[C] **Website accessibility** - Websites must meet the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines 22.2 AA and the Public Sector Bodies (Websites and Mobile Applications) (No. 2) Accessibility Regulations 2018 (where applicable).

[D] **Published documentation requirements** - The Council website (www.witney-tc.gov.uk) includes published documentation as specified in the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Transparency code for smaller authorities (where applicable).

[E] **Legal requirements** The Council follows both the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2016 and the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018.

[F] **Processing of personal data** - The Council processes personal data with care and in line with the principles of data protection.

[G] **Data Controller and Data Processor** - Note that the DPA 2018 supplements the GDPR and classifies an authority as both a Data Controller and a Data Processor.

[H] **IT policy** - The Council has an IT policy which explains how everyone - clerks, members and other staff - should conduct authority business in a secure and legal way when using IT equipment and software. This relates to the use of authority-owned and personal equipment.

Page 5 – Section 2 - Annual Return 2025/26

‘Section 2 of the Annual Return – Accounting Statements’ is the statutory form of accounts required of councils if the higher of the authority's gross income for the year and its gross expenditure for the year does not exceed £6,500,000.

It is subject to External audit as part of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2025/26 Form 3.

There is one item to note in relation to the figure in line 8 - Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets.

The figure previously published for the year ended 31 March 2025 was £7,573,997 whereas the records suggest that it should have been £7,599,265. The RFO is attempting to reconcile the reason for the difference, noting that this is a “book figure” which will not affect the actual assets owned. The RFO has therefore included the prior year comparison figure as £7,599,265 and consequently the column has, in accordance with the guidance in the Practitioners’ Guide, been headed up “Restated.”

The draft management accounts for 2025-26 are presented as a separate agenda item. This does not affect the AGAR.

Page 6 – Section 3 – External Auditor’s Report and Certificate 2025/26

When the audit is completed the External Auditor, Moore (Peterborough office) will issue their report in the format set out in this section. It is therefore blank at present.

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:

1. A Forward Looking Town Council

However, as all services require financing and their efficient delivery relies on robust controls, strong financial management and constant monitoring, of which this report is an integral part, this report may be said to contribute to all of the strategic pillars.

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 Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 require relevant bodies to complete and approve an Annual Return which must then be submitted to the external auditors by the 30 June each year. Undertaking this exercise is an important part of considering and managing the Council's risk. Furthermore, consideration and action in relation to the matters outlined in this report is essential in order to comply with the law.

Social Value

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

Robust financial management, control and compliance with the Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2015 is a prerequisite of enabling the Council to deliver social value.

Financial implications

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and recommend to the Full Council:

- 1) That the Annual Internal Audit report be noted for consideration when answering the questions in relation to Section 1 of the Annual Governance Statement.
- 2) That the Annual Governance Statement at Section 1 of the Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2026 be approved and adopted (note that the RFO considers that Members should answer Yes to questions 1 to 8 and 10 and not applicable to question 9);
- 3) That the Statement of Accounts at Section 2 of the Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2026 be approved and adopted;
- 4) That the draft notice advertising electors' rights for 2025/26 is noted.

Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2025/26 Form 3

To be completed by Local Councils, Internal Drainage Boards and other Smaller Authorities*:

- where the higher of gross income or gross expenditure exceeded £25,000 but did not exceed £15 million; or
- where the higher of gross income or gross expenditure was £25,000 or less but that:
 - are unable to certify themselves as exempt (fee payable); or
 - have requested a limited assurance review (fee payable)

Guidance notes on completing Form 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return 2025/26

1. Every smaller authority in England that either received gross income or incurred gross expenditure exceeding £25,000 **must** complete Form 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return at the end of each financial year in accordance with *Proper Practices*.
2. **The Annual Governance and Accountability Return is made up of three parts, pages 3 to 6:**
 - The **Annual Internal Audit Report** **must** be completed by the authority's internal auditor.
 - **Sections 1 and 2** **must** be completed and approved by the authority.
 - **Section 3** is completed by the external auditor and will be returned to the authority.
3. The authority **must** approve Section 1, Annual Governance Statement, before approving Section 2, Accounting Statements, and both **must** be approved and published on the authority website/webpage **before 1 July 2026**.
4. An authority with either gross income or gross expenditure exceeding £25,000 or an authority with neither income nor expenditure exceeding £25,000, but which is unable to certify itself as exempt, or is requesting a limited assurance review, **must** return to the external auditor by email or post (not both) **no later than 30 June 2026** Reminder letters will incur a charge of £40 +VAT:
 - the Annual Governance and Accountability Return Sections 1 and 2, together with
 - a bank reconciliation as at 31 March 2026
 - an explanation of any significant year on year variances in the accounting statements
 - notification of the commencement date of the period for the exercise of public rights
 - Annual Internal Audit Report 2025/26

Unless requested, do not send any additional documents to your external auditor. Your external auditor will ask for any additional documents needed.

Once the external auditor has completed the limited assurance review and is able to give an opinion, the Annual Governance and Accountability Return **Section 1, Section 2 and Section 3 – External Auditor Report and Certificate** will be returned to the authority by email or post.

Publication Requirements

Under the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, authorities **must** publish the following information on the authority website/webpage:

Before 1 July 2026 authorities **must** publish:

- Notice of the period for the exercise of public rights and a declaration that the accounting statements are as yet unaudited;
- **Section 1 - Annual Governance Statement 2025/26** approved and signed, page 4
- **Section 2 - Accounting Statements 2025/26** approved and signed, page 5

Not later than 30 September 2026 authorities **must** publish:

- Notice of conclusion of audit
- **Section 3 - External Auditor Report and Certificate**
- **Sections 1 and 2 of AGAR** including any amendments as a result of the limited assurance review. It is recommended as best practice, to avoid any potential confusion by local electors and interested parties, that you also publish the Annual Internal Audit Report, page 3.

The Annual Governance and Accountability Return constitutes the annual return referred to in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015. Throughout, the words 'external auditor' have the same meaning as the words 'local auditor' in the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015.

*for a complete list of bodies that may be smaller authorities refer to schedule 2 to the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014.

Guidance notes on completing Form 3 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2025/26

- The authority **must** comply with *Proper Practices* in completing Sections 1 and 2 of this AGAR. *Proper Practices* are found in the *Practitioners' Guide** which is updated from time to time and contains everything needed to prepare successfully for the financial year-end and the subsequent work by the external auditor.
- Make sure that the AGAR is complete (no highlighted boxes left empty) and is properly signed and dated. Any amendments **must** be approved by the authority and properly initialled.
- The authority **should** receive and note the Annual Internal Audit Report before approving the Annual Governance Statement and the accounts.
- Use the checklist provided below to review the AGAR for completeness before returning it to the external auditor by email or post (not both) no later than 30 June 2026
- The Annual Governance Statement (Section 1) **must** be approved before the Accounting Statements (Section 2) and evidenced by the agenda or minute references, even where approved on the same day.
- The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) **must** certify the accounts (Section 2) before they are presented to the authority for approval. The authority **must** in this order; consider, approve and sign the accounts.
- The RFO is required to commence the public rights period which **must** be a single period of 30 working days for inspection (this excludes weekends and public holidays) which **must** include the first 10 working days of July.
- **You must inform your external auditor about any change of Clerk, Responsible Financial Officer or Chair, and provide relevant authority owned generic email addresses and telephone numbers.**
- Make sure that the copy of the bank reconciliation to be sent to your external auditor with the AGAR covers all the bank accounts. If the authority holds any short-term investments, note their value on the bank reconciliation. The external auditor **must** be able to agree the bank reconciliation to Box 8 on the accounting statements (**Section 2, page 5**). An explanation **must** be provided of any difference between Box 7 and Box 8. More help on bank reconciliation is available in the *Practitioners' Guide**.
- Explain fully significant variances in the accounting statements on **page 5**. Do not just send a copy of the detailed accounting records instead of this explanation. The external auditor wants to know that you understand the reasons for all variances. Include complete numerical and narrative analysis to support the full variance.
- Additional costs may be incurred if additional audit work is required.
- Make sure that the accounting statements add up and that the balance carried forward from the previous year (Box 7 of 2025) equals the balance brought forward in the current year (Box 1 of 2026).
- The Responsible Financial Officer (RFO), on behalf of the authority, **must** set the commencement date for the exercise of public rights which **must** be a single period of 30 working days for inspection (this excludes weekends and public holidays) which **must** include the first 10 working days of July.
- The authority **must** publish on the authority website/webpage the information required by Regulation 15 (2), Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, including the period for the exercise of public rights and the name and address of the external auditor **before 1 July 2026**

Completion checklist – 'No' answers mean you may not have met requirements		Yes	No
All sections	Have all highlighted boxes have been completed?	✓	
	Has all additional information requested, including the dates set for the period for the exercise of public rights , been provided for the external auditor?		
Internal Audit Report	Have all highlighted boxes been completed by the internal auditor and explanations provided?		
Section 1	For any statement to which the response is 'no', has an explanation been published?		
Section 2	Has the Responsible Financial Officer signed the accounting statements before presentation to the authority for approval?		
	Has the authority's approval of the accounting statements been confirmed by the signature of the Chair of the approval meeting?		
	Has an explanation of significant variations been published where required?		
	Has the bank reconciliation as at 31 March 2026 been reconciled to Box 8?		
	Has an explanation of any difference between Box 7 and Box 8 been provided?		
Sections 1 and 2	Trust funds – have all disclosures been made if the authority as a body corporate is a sole managing trustee? NB: do not send trust accounting statements unless requested.		

**Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities in England – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices*, can be downloaded from www.nalc.gov.uk or from www.ada.org.uk

Annual Internal Audit Report 2025/26

WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

www.witney-tc.gov.uk

During the financial year ended 31 March 2026, this authority's internal auditor acting independently and on the basis of an assessment of risk, carried out a selective assessment of compliance with the relevant procedures and controls in operation and obtained appropriate evidence from the authority.

The internal audit for 2025/26 has been carried out in accordance with this authority's needs and planned coverage. On the basis of the findings in the areas examined, the internal audit conclusions are summarised in this table. Set out below are the objectives of internal control and alongside are the internal audit conclusions on whether, in all significant respects, the control objectives were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of this authority.

Internal control objective	Yes	No*	Not covered**
A. Appropriate accounting records have been properly kept throughout the financial year.	✓		
B. This authority complied with its financial regulations, payments were supported by invoices, all expenditure was approved and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
C. This authority assessed the significant risks to achieving its objectives and reviewed the adequacy of arrangements to manage these.	✓		
D. The precept or rates requirement resulted from an adequate budgetary process: progress against the budget was regularly monitored: and reserves were appropriate.	✓		
E. Expected income was fully received, based on correct prices, properly recorded and promptly banked, and VAT was appropriately accounted for.	✓		
F. Cash payments were properly supported by receipts, all cash expenditure was approved and VAT appropriately accounted for.	✓		
G. Salaries to employees and allowances to members were paid in accordance with this authority's approvals, and PAYE and NI requirements were properly applied.	✓		
H. Asset and investments registers were complete and accurate and properly maintained.	✓		
I. Periodic bank account reconciliations were properly carried out during the year.	✓		
J. Accounting statements prepared during the year were prepared on the correct accounting basis (receipts and payments or income and expenditure), agreed to the cash book, supported by an adequate audit trail from underlying records and where appropriate debtors and creditors were properly recorded.	✓		
K. If the authority certified itself as exempt from a limited assurance review in 2024/25, it met the exemption criteria and correctly declared itself exempt. (If the authority had a limited assurance review of its 2024/25 AGAR tick "not covered")			✓
L. The authority published the required information on a website/webpage up to date at the time of the internal audit in accordance with the relevant legislation.	✓		
M. In the year covered by this AGAR, the authority correctly provided for a period for the exercise of public rights as required by the Accounts and Audit Regulations (during the 2025/26 AGAR period, were public rights in relation to the 2024-25 AGAR evidenced by a notice on the website and/or authority approved minutes confirming the dates set).	✓		
N. The authority has complied with the publication requirements for 2024/25 AGAR (see AGAR Page 1 Guidance Notes).	✓		
O. The authority has complied with laws, regulations & proper practices relating to digital and data compliance.	✓		
P. (For local councils only) Trust funds (including charitable) – The council met its responsibilities as a trustee.			✓

For any other risk areas identified by this authority adequate controls existed (list any other risk areas on separate sheets if needed).

Date(s) internal audit undertaken

Name of person who carried out the internal audit

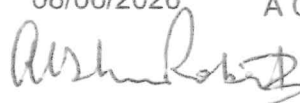
18/12/2025

20/02/2026

08/06/2026

A C Shepherd-Roberts

Signature of person who carried out the internal audit



Date

08/06/2026

*If the response is 'no' please state the implications and action being taken to address any weakness in control identified (add separate sheets if needed).

**Note: If the response is 'not covered' please state when the most recent internal audit work was done in this area and when it is next planned; or, if coverage is not required, the annual internal audit report must explain why not (add separate sheets if needed).

Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2025/26

We acknowledge as the members of:

WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

our responsibility for ensuring that there is a sound system of internal control, including arrangements for the preparation of the Accounting Statements. We confirm, to the best of our knowledge and belief, with respect to the Accounting Statements for the year ended 31 March 2026, that:

	Agreed		‘Yes’ means that this authority:
	Yes	No*	
1. We have put in place arrangements for effective financial management during the year, and for the preparation of the accounting statements.			<i>prepared its accounting statements in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations.</i>
2. We maintained an adequate system of internal control including measures designed to prevent and detect fraud and corruption and reviewed its effectiveness.			<i>made proper arrangements and accepted responsibility for safeguarding the public money and resources in its charge.</i>
3. We have assured ourselves that there are no matters of actual or potential non-compliance with laws, regulations and Proper Practices that could have a significant financial effect on the ability of this authority to conduct its business or manage its finances.			<i>has only done what it has the legal power to do and has complied with Proper Practices in doing so.</i>
4. We provided proper opportunity during the year for the exercise of electors’ rights in accordance with the requirements of the Accounts and Audit Regulations.			<i>during the year gave all persons interested the opportunity to inspect and ask questions about this authority’s accounts.</i>
5. We carried out an assessment of the risks facing this authority and took appropriate steps to manage those risks, including the introduction of internal controls and/or external insurance cover where required.			<i>considered and documented the financial and other risks it faces and dealt with them properly.</i>
6. We maintained throughout the year an adequate and effective system of internal audit of the accounting records and control systems.			<i>arranged for a competent person, independent of the financial controls and procedures, to give an objective view on whether internal controls meet the needs of this smaller authority.</i>
7. We took appropriate action on all matters raised in reports from internal and external audit.			<i>responded to matters brought to its attention by internal and external audit.</i>
8. We considered whether any litigation, liabilities or commitments, events or transactions, occurring either during or after the year-end, have a financial impact on this authority and, where appropriate, have included them in the accounting statements.			<i>disclosed everything it should have about its business activity during the year including events taking place after the year end if relevant.</i>
9. (For local councils only) Trust funds including charitable. In our capacity as the sole managing trustee we discharged our accountability responsibilities for the fund(s)/assets, including financial reporting and, if required, independent examination or audit.	Yes	No	N/A <i>has met all of its responsibilities where, as a body corporate, it is a sole managing trustee of a local trust or trusts.</i>
10. We have put in place arrangements for the effective IT and data management in accordance with proper practices during the year under review.			<i>has made suitable arrangements for its IT and data management and has complied with proper practices in doing so.</i>

***Please provide explanations to the external auditor on a separate sheet for each ‘No’ response and describe how the authority will address the weaknesses identified. These sheets must be published with the Annual Governance Statement.**

This Annual Governance Statement was approved at a meeting of the authority on:

and recorded as minute reference:

Signed by the Chair and Clerk of the meeting where approval was given:

Chair

Clerk

www.witney-tc.gov.uk

Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2025/26 for

WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

	Year ending		Notes and guidance
	31 March 2025 £	31 March 2026 £	
			<i>Please round all figures to nearest £1. Do not leave any boxes blank and report £0 or Nil balances. All figures must agree to underlying financial records.</i>
1. Balances brought forward	* RESTATED 2,654,529	2,668,913	Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the financial records. Value must agree to Box 7 of previous year.
2. (+) Precept or Rates and Levies	1,984,834	2,297,745	Total amount of precept (or for IDBs rates and levies) received or receivable in the year. Exclude any grants received.
3. (+) Total other receipts	642,404	2,307,625	Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook less the precept or rates/levies received (line 2). Include any grants received.
4. (-) Staff costs	1,376,872	1,464,073	Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all employees. Include gross salaries and wages, employers NI contributions, employers pension contributions, gratuities and severance payments.
5. (-) Loan interest/capital repayments	0	0	Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the authority's borrowings (if any).
6. (-) All other payments	1,235,982	2,678,949	Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cashbook less staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/capital repayments (line 5).
7. (=) Balances carried forward	2,668,913	3,131,261	Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. must equal (1+2+3) - (4+5+6).
8. Total value of cash and short term investments	3,225,412	3,488,976	The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and short term investments held as at 31 March – To agree with bank reconciliation.
9. Total fixed assets plus long term investments and assets	* 7,599,265	7,663,305	The value of all the property the authority owns – it is made up of all its fixed assets and long term investments as at 31 March.
10. Total borrowings	0	960,000	The outstanding capital balance as at 31 March of all loans from third parties (including PWLB).
For Local Councils Only			
	Yes	No	
11 Do the figures in the accounting statements above exclude any trust transactions?	✓		For guidance refer to the Practitioners' Guide sections 2.31 to 2.33.

I certify that for the year ended 31 March 2026 the Accounting Statements in this Annual Governance and Accountability Return have been prepared on either a receipts and payments or income and expenditure basis following the guidance in Governance and Accountability for Smaller Authorities – a Practitioners' Guide to Proper Practices and present fairly the financial position of this authority.

Signed by Responsible Financial Officer before being presented to the authority for approval.

N E Warner

17/06/2026

Date

I confirm that these Accounting Statements were approved by this authority on this date:

as recorded in minute reference:

Signed by Chair of the meeting where the Accounting Statements were approved

Section 3 – External Auditor’s Report and Certificate 2025/26

In respect of

WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

1 Respective responsibilities of the auditor and the authority

Our responsibility as auditors to complete a **limited assurance review** is set out by the National Audit Office (NAO). A limited assurance review is **not a full statutory audit**, it does not constitute an audit carried out in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland) and hence it **does not** provide the same level of assurance that such an audit would. The UK Government has determined that a lower level of assurance than that provided by a full statutory audit is appropriate for those local public bodies with the lowest levels of spending.

Under a limited assurance review, the auditor is responsible for reviewing Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with NAO Auditor Guidance Note 02 (AGN 02) as issued by the NAO on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General. AGN 02 is available from the NAO website – <https://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/guidance-and-information-for-auditors/> .

This authority is responsible for ensuring that its financial management is adequate and effective and that it has a sound system of internal control. The authority prepares an Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with *Proper Practices* which:

- summarises the accounting records for the year ended 31 March 2026 and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors.

2 External auditor’s limited assurance opinion 2025/26

(Except for the matters reported below)* on the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return is in accordance with Proper Practices and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met. (*delete as appropriate).

(continue on a separate sheet if required)

Other matters not affecting our opinion which we draw to the attention of the authority:

(continue on a separate sheet if required)

3 External auditor certificate 2025/26

We certify/do not certify* that we have completed our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, and discharged our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, for the year ended 31 March 2026

*We do not certify completion because:

External Auditor Name

External Auditor Signature

Date

--	--

LOCAL AUTHORITY ACCOUNTS: A SUMMARY OF YOUR RIGHTS

Please note that this summary applies to all relevant smaller authorities, including local councils, internal drainage boards and 'other' smaller authorities.

The basic position

By law, any interested person has the right to inspect the accounting records of smaller authorities. If you are a local government elector or registered to vote in the local councils' elections, then you are able to ask questions about the accounts and object to them.

The right to inspect the accounting records

When your council has finalised its accounts for the previous financial year, they must advertise that they are available for people to inspect. You must then provide the council with reasonable notice of your intentions. Following this, by arrangement you will then have 30 working days to inspect and make copies of the accounting records and supporting documents. You may be required to pay a copying charge.

The right to ask the auditor questions about the accounting records

If you have any questions regarding the accounting records, you should first ask your smaller authority. This must be done during the 30-day period for the exercise of public rights. You may also ask the appointed auditor questions about an item in the accounting records. However, the auditor can only answer 'what' questions, not 'why' questions so is limited with their response. To avoid any confusion, it is advised that you put your questions in writing.

The right to make objections

Should you view something as unlawful or believe there are matters of wider concern in the accounts, you may wish to object. If you are a local government elector, you have the right to ask the external auditor to apply to the courts for a declaration that an item is contrary to the law and should be reported as a matter of public interest. This must be done by telling the appointed auditor which specific item in the accounts you object to and why you believe it to be unlawful or think a public interest report should be made about it. You must provide clear evidence to support your objection, and this should be done in writing and the copied to the council.

You should not use the 'right to object' to make a personal complaint or claim against your smaller authority. Complaints of this nature should be taken to your local Citizens' Advice Bureau, local Law Centre or to your solicitor.

A final word

Smaller authorities, and so local taxpayers, meet the costs of dealing with questions and objections. In deciding whether to take your objection forward, the auditor must consider the cost that will be involved. They will only continue with the objection if it is in the public interest to do so. If you appeal to the courts against an auditor's decision, you may have to pay for the action yourself.



Witney Town Council

Internal Audit Report 2025-26: Final update

Adrian Shepherd-Roberts

*For and on behalf of
Auditing Solutions Ltd*

Background

All town and parish councils are required by statute to make arrangements for an independent internal audit examination of their accounting records and system of internal control and for the conclusions to be reported each year in the Annual Return. Auditing Solutions Ltd has provided this service to Witney Town Council since 2003.

This report sets out the work undertaken in relation to the 2025-26 financial year which was undertaken initially over two days and completed by the 18th December 2025 and subsequent update reviews on 20th February & 8th June 2026. We wish to thank the Clerk, the Responsible Finance Officer and staff for assisting the process, providing all necessary documentation to facilitate completion of our review for the year to date. We have ensured that governance and financial controls remain effective.

Internal Audit Approach

In undertaking our reviews for the year, we have had regard to the materiality of transactions and their susceptibility to potential mis-recording or misrepresentation in the year-end Statement of Accounts/Annual Return. We have employed a combination of selective sampling techniques (where appropriate) and 100% detailed checks in a number of key areas in order to gain sufficient assurance that the Council's financial and regulatory systems and controls are appropriate and fit for the purposes intended.

Our programme of cover has been designed to afford appropriate assurance that the Council's financial systems are robust and operate in a manner to ensure effective probity of transactions and to afford a reasonable probability of identifying any material errors or possible abuse of the Council's own and the national statutory regulatory framework. The programme is also designed to facilitate our completion of the 'Annual Internal Audit Report' in the Council's Annual Return, which requires independent assurance over a number of internal control objectives.

Overall Conclusion

We have concluded that, on the basis of the programme of work we have undertaken, the Council has maintained adequate and effective internal control arrangements during the year.

We are also pleased to record that, in the areas examined, no major issues or concerns have been identified.

We consider the Clerk and her staff continue to operate generally effective control procedures in in most areas. We ask that members consider the content of this report and acknowledge that the report has been reviewed by Council.

We have completed and signed the 'Annual Internal Audit Report' in the year's Annual Governance and Accountability Return, having concluded that, in all significant respects, the control objectives set out in that report were being achieved throughout the financial year to a standard adequate to meet the needs of the Council.

This report has been prepared for the sole use of Witney Town Council. To the fullest extent permitted by law, no responsibility or liability is accepted by Auditing Solutions Ltd to any third party who purports to use or rely, for any reason whatsoever, on this report, its contents or conclusions.

Detailed Report

Review of Accounting Arrangements & Bank Reconciliations

The Council maintains its accounting records using Omega software and continues to operate three bank accounts with Barclays, the Current account being used for the receipt of income and processing of high value payments, with the second Imprest account used for all routine payments and the third for retention of surplus funds and to provide funding for the former two accounts.

Our objective here is to ensure that the accounting records are being maintained accurately and currently and that no anomalous entries appear in cashbooks or financial ledgers. To that end, we have:

- Ensured that the ledger remains in balance at the current date;
- Verified the opening trial balance detail for 2025-26 with that reported in the 2024-25 Accounts and Annual Return;
- Checked and agreed transactions in the three bank account cashbooks to the relevant bank statements for April, September and December 2025 and March 2026 noting that these records continue to be maintained in a timely and accurate manner;
- Checked and agreed all inter account “sweep” transactions between the Imprest and premium accounts, to retain a daily balance on the former of £1,000, for the same months; and
- Checked detail on bank reconciliations as at 30th April 2025, 30th September and 31st December 2025 and 31st March 2026 for each account to ensure that no long-standing uncleared cheques or other potentially anomalous balancing entries exist.

Conclusions

We are pleased to record that no issues have been identified from work completed in this area for the financial year.

Review of Corporate Governance

Our objective here is to ensure that the Council has robust corporate governance arrangements in place; that Council and Committee meetings are conducted in accordance with the adopted Standing Orders and that, as far as we are able to ascertain, no actions of a potentially unlawful nature have been or are being considered for implementation. We: -

- Noted previously that the Standing Orders and Financial Regulations were reviewed and formally approved by Full Council in June 2025 respectively;
- Noted previously that General Powers of Competence were adopted at the May 2023 Full Council meeting; and
- Have undertaken our review of the Council’s minutes and consideration of other governance issues for the year to date to identify whether or not any issues exist that may have an adverse effect, through litigation or other causes, on the Council’s future financial stability.

- We are satisfied that The Council have met the requirements for Assertion 10 for this financial year.

Conclusions

We are pleased to record that no issues have been identified from work currently undertaken in this area.

Review of Expenditure

Our aim here is to ensure that: -

- Council resources are released in accordance with the Council's approved procedures and budgets;
- Payments are supported by appropriate records, either in the form of an original trade invoice or other appropriate form of document confirming the payment as due and/or an acknowledgement of receipt, where no other form of invoice is available;
- An official order has been raised for the acquisition of goods or service delivery, where one would be anticipated;
- All discounts due on goods and services supplied are identified and appropriate action taken to secure the discount;
- The correct expense codes have been applied to invoices when processed; and
- VAT has been appropriately identified and coded to the control account for periodic recovery.

We have completed our testing in this area, examining a sample of payments excluding salaries, to 31st March 2026.

We also note that VAT returns continue to be completed in a timely and accurate manner, with electronic "on-line" submission now in place, in line with HMRC requirements. We have examined the quarterly reclaims March 2026 confirming that the detail correlates to that in the Omega VAT control account.

Conclusions

No matters arise in this area warranting formal comment or recommendation.

Assessment and Management of Risk

Our aim here is to ensure that the Council has put in place appropriate arrangements to identify all potential areas of risk of both a financial and health and safety nature, whilst also ensuring that appropriate arrangements exist to monitor and manage those risks identified in order to minimise the opportunity for their coming to fruition.

We note that the LCRS based risk assessment documentation was formally re-adopted by Council in the 2025-2026.

We have also examined the Council's insurance policy schedule for 2025-26, with cover again provided by Zurich Municipal, noting that Fidelity Guarantee cover is in place at £5 million, Public Liability at £15 million & Employer's Liability at £10 million.

Conclusions

No matters arise in this area warranting formal comment or recommendation.

Precept Determination and Budget Control

Our objective here is to ensure that the Council has a robust procedure in place for identifying and approving its future budgetary requirements and the level of precept to be drawn down from the District Council: also, that an effective reporting and monitoring process is in place. We also aim to ensure that the Council retains appropriate funds in general and earmarked reserves to finance its ongoing spending plans, whilst retaining appropriate sums to cover any unplanned expenditure that might arise.

We note from the Full Council minutes that the Council, at its 2nd February 2025 meeting approved a precept of £2,427,251 for 2026-27.

We are pleased to note that members continue to receive regular budget monitoring reports with over/under-spends and the level of earmarked reserves the subject of regular review.

Conclusions

No issues have been identified in this area warranting formal comment or recommendation.

Review of Income

The Council receives income from a plethora of sources in addition to the annual precept including allotments, cemeteries, sports pitches and the Corn Exchange. We have previously agreed a five-year strategic plan of cover of these areas with the Town Clerk and Council, which is subject to ongoing review and update, where necessary, following any changes in service provision. We have: -

- Examined the controls in place over the identification and recovery of income due to the Council from the two cemeteries together with the invoicing, tracing detail from the source documents and the burial records to the subsequent receipt and banking of the fees.
- We have at the update audit reviewed the food sales income from the Corn Exchange café and are satisfied that the funds are accurately recorded and managed in a satisfactory manner;
- We have reviewed the ledgers in respect of the income generated from the Corn Exchange to include bar, food and hot drinks and the EPOS system payments.
- We have also reviewed a sample from the Rialtas Diary in respect of the bookings and the issuing of invoices and collection of payments for the facilities and rooms at the Corn Exchange, Burwell Hall and The Leys.

We have also reviewed the unpaid invoices relating to the outstanding debtor position. We have discussed this debtor position with the Responsible Finance Officer and we consider that there is satisfactory monitoring in respect of these invoices.

Conclusions

We are satisfied that the Café facilities are well managed and the facilities booking system is controlled in a satisfactory manner.

Petty Cash Account

Our aim in this area is to ensure that appropriate controls are in place; that all expenditure incurred is adequately supported by trade invoices or till receipts; that the expenditure is appropriate for the Council's requirements; that VAT has been separately identified for periodic recovery and that cheque encashments from the main cashbooks are properly recorded.

We have checked the cash at the Town Hall and reviewed the holding from the information that we have been provided.

We have also reviewed the fuel Card accounts data and consider that the controls regarding its use are satisfactory.

Conclusions

There are no matters requiring formal comment or recommendation in this area of our review process.

Salaries and Wages

In examining the Council's payroll function, we aim to confirm that extant legislation is being appropriately observed as regards adherence to the Employee Rights Act 1998 and the requirements of HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) legislation as regards the deduction and payment over of income tax and NI contributions, together with meeting the requirements of the local government pension scheme, as further revised from 1st April 2023 in relation to employee percentage bandings. To meet that objective, we have checked detail of payroll transactions in October 2025, ensuring that: -

- Gross salaries are paid in accord with the approved NJC scale points;
- The correct PAYE codes and NIC tables were being applied;
- Appropriate rates of superannuation deductions are being applied;
- Timesheets are prepared, signed by the employee and certified as correct for payment by their supervising officer; and
- Net salary payments, via the BACS banking process, were in accord with staff payslips for the month.

Conclusions

We are pleased to record that no issues have been identified in this area of our review.

Fixed Asset Registers

The Governance and Accountability Manual requires all councils to maintain a record of all assets owned. We have checked and agreed the principles used in the detail, as recorded in the Council's Asset Register, noting that it has been prepared using purchase cost values or where that value is unknown at the previous year's Return level or uplifted or decreased to reflect the acquisition or disposal of assets.

Conclusion

No issues require formal comment or recommendation.

Investments and Loans

Our objectives here are to ensure that the Council is "investing" surplus funds, be they held temporarily or on a longer term basis in appropriate banking and investment institutions, that an appropriate investment policy is in place, that the Council is obtaining the best rate of return on any such investments made, that interest earned is brought to account correctly and appropriately in the accounting records. We also aim to ensure that any loan repayments due to or payable by the Council are transacted in accordance with appropriate loan agreements.

The Council has two specific investments with CCLA Investment Management Limited, a deposit account and a long-term investment in the CCLA Property Fund, with the remaining surplus funds being held in the Barclays Business Premium account.

We have also reviewed the new Public Works Loan for West Witney Sports & Pavillion and note that this has now been drawn down.

We also note that the Council have provided a loan to the Witney Town Bowls Club initially repayable over a ten-year term.

Conclusions

We are pleased to report that no issues have been identified in this area of our review.

Annual Governance and Accountability Return

The Accounts and Audit Regulations required that all Councils prepare a detailed Statement of Accounts, together with supporting statements identifying other aspects of the Council's financial affairs.

As part of our year-end review, we have checked to the March 2026 cash books, nominal ledgers, purchase & sales ledgers and year end trial balances.

We have also examined the Council's procedures in relation to the preparation of the year-end detailed Annual Governance and Accountability Return data, also reviewing the Trial Balance figures and the accounts to include the identification of year-end debtors and creditors with no issues arising.

Conclusions

No issues have arisen in this review area and, on the basis of the work undertaken during the year, we have duly signed off the Internal Audit Report of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, assigning positive assurances in most areas

POLICY, GOVERNANCE & FINANCE COMMITTEE



Agenda Item: Financial Matters referred from Spending Committees

Meeting Date: Monday, 22 June 2026

Contact Officer: Deputy Town Clerk

Background

It is the Council's usual practice that all matters discussed, and recommendations made by spending Committees which have financial implications, are reported to this committee.

Following a resolution of Full Council on 6 October (Minute No. 581 refers), this report provides a summary of all spending committee decisions, both approved and declined, to ensure comprehensive and transparent scrutiny by this Committee which holds overall responsibility for the Council's financial management and oversight of budgetary decisions.

Current Situation

Climate & Biodiversity Committee – 19 May 2026

CB253 – Biodiversity Update. The Committee noted an update regarding the Green Flag Award application for the Lake & Country Park, including the associated resubmission fee of £500 which had previously been agreed.

Parks & Recreation Committee – 1 June 2026

PR270 – Leys Splash Park – Summer Opening. The Committee recommended:

- That, the splash park operating hours be amended to 10:00am to 5:00pm with immediate effect and;
- That an update on water usage and associated costs against budget be presented to the Full Council meeting on 13 July. In order that the Council can review the position and make any necessary adjustments.
- That, given the quorum of the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee Members present, the revised operating hours be implemented with immediate effect rather than awaiting formal ratification.

As this item was time sensitive, it was agreed that the change in timings should be implemented immediately and that this decision should be reported to this Committee.

PR271 - Sports Pitches – The Committee recommended that potential budget implications for re-seeding the pitches at Windrush Place sports pitches be prepared for this meeting, if appropriate. Following a recent site visit, officers do not consider this is a task which is required at this time.

PR273 - Leys Redevelopment – The Committee recommended that £5,600 should be allocated for cycle storage, bins, and seating at The Leys from the Council's Infrastructure earmarked reserve.

It was further agreed that quotes for improved robust fencing between the Courtside Hub and the Council' Skate Park would be brought to this meeting. Details on this are covered in a separate report from the Head of Estates & Operations appended to this report.

Halls Cemeteries & Allotments Committee – 8 June 2026

Public Halls Report -

- The Committee recommended approval for **wedding packages** at the Corn Exchange. The proposed packages are attached as Appendix A.
- The Committee recommended approval for the installation of **hearing loops** at the Corn Exchange as presented in the report for the sum of up to £20,000 (figures in the report were inclusive of VAT).

The Council has £6,000 funded towards this project in the current year, and the Venue & Events Officer has applied for grant funding towards the remainder of the costs.

On the outcome of the grant applications, and due to the accessibility needs at the venues, the Committee may like to consider a supplementary maximum budget of £6,000 from the general reserve to install the hearing loops in the three principal areas of Corn Exchange Main Hall & Gallery Room and Burwell Hall.

In addition, it was agreed portable hearing loops (£250 each) should be available at the Council's other enclosed public areas; 1863 café and the Reception/Administration Office. These can be funded from budget lines 4042/602 (Reception) and 4042/103 (Café).

- While not, financial related, this Committee should also note the recommendation of the Committee to approve amendments to the **Public Halls terms and conditions** suggested during a recent routine Fire Assessment of the Corn Exchange. These may be seen here: [260608 Public Halls Report.pdf](#)

Commemorative Plaque Request - The Committee recommended purchase and erection of a plaque to commemorate Cpl John S Christiansen at the Tower Hill Memorial Wall for the sum of up to £120 from budget line 4036/301.

Climate Action Working Party – 11 June 2026

Wildflower Planting — The Committee recommended that the Council goes ahead with removing the current planting scheme at Curbridge Road Roundabout and replacing it with lower height wildflowers. The costs of this project are indicated below:

- Contractor cost to remove the existing roots and clear ready for planting is £400
- The cost of the seed mix is £250
- The works team cost will be recharged for this work but will come from existing staffing budgets

Carbon Reduction Plan – It was recommended that the allocated budget of £50,000, priority should be in line with previous decisions, and concentrated on Corn Exchange and Windrush Cemetery, with Burwell Hall being added. In particular, the simplest options in the reports should be completed operationally.

Eco Fair 2026 – Both the C&B Committee and the WP agreed the Council should hold a further Eco Fair at the Corn Exchange in September. This would require subsidised use of the Main Hall for the day.

Stronger Communities Committee – 15 June 2026

Finance Report – The Committee recommended that the budget line for Experience Oxfordshire should be re-allocated as this was something the Council was not pursuing. It was subsequently confirmed this has been removed from the 2026/27 year.

Community Engagement Report -

- Heritage Open Day. The Committee recommended allocating an underspend on the St George's Day event of £200 towards a Heritage Open Day led event in September.
- Big Lunch. The Committee recommended providing a budget to an external community group to facilitate a Big Lunch in June 2027.
- Love Parks Week. The Committee recommended that a volunteer picnic be held in Love Parks week to thank them for their help in the year (from existing budgets)
- WTC Bunting. The Committee recommended purchasing bunting in the town council's colours to decorate Market Square (near the Corn Exchange) annually. (funded from existing budgets).

Youth Council – It was confirmed that the Youth Council had joined the National Youth Council UK. This incurred a cost of £100 from the existing Youth Council budget.

Youth Services Grants – The Committee received the applications and provided direction on their allocation to the Evaluation Panel. Its recommendations are a separate item on the agenda for this Committee.

Litter picking Cabinets – The Committee recommended the purchase of three cabinets (option 2) for the most appropriate locations on town council land for the sum of £1,800 to be funded from the Infrastructure earmarked reserve.

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 – Covered in specific project reports.
- b) Biodiversity – Covered in specific project reports.
- c) Crime & Disorder – Covered in specific project reports.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency - Covered in specific project reports.

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 the Council's Committees receive financial reports to conduct its checks and balances, and consideration is given to budgets and funding availability when agreeing expenditure.

Social Value

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

The benefits of these items should be considered at the time of recommendation.

Financial implications

The report forms part of the Council's mechanisms for budgetary control. Specific financial implications are detailed.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and,

1. Consider agreeing the recommendations of the spending committees as detailed above and the consider or note the additional deferred items:
 - a) Improved fencing at The Leys Skate Park as set out in the accompanying report;
 - b) Additional funding for hearing loops in the Council's public facing facilities;
 - c) The costs for remedial work to improve Curbridge Road Roundabout;
 - d) Subsidised letting for the second annual Eco Fair.

Corn Exchange

Full Proposal of Wedding Packages are outlined below:

Ceremony Only Options:

The Gallery Room- 2-hours (not-exclusive hire): £310.00 (no change)

The Gallery Room – 2-hours exclusive use of venue from 1:30pm onwards: £530.50

Ceremony & Reception Options

Package 1: £1318 (Basic)

Reflects **current charge for “Exclusive Hire”** and includes the basics required to deliver the booking.

- Use of the venue for one day (09:00am earliest access – 00:00 latest exit)
- Set up and pack down to be completed by the hirer on same day
- Supervisor to co-ordinate with registrars for ceremony
- Furniture set up upon arrival
- PA system for ceremony music
- 2 consultations (not including viewing) 6 months before, 1 month before (guidance)
- Bar included on minimum spend policy (custom quote per event)

Package 2: £2300 (Elevated)

- The above PLUS:
- PA set up including mics
- Use of stage (if desired)
- X1 Additional consultation (3 total)
- Included set up & pack down time (4 hrs either side)
 - 4pm – 8pm day before
 - 9am - 1pm day after

Package 3: £3000 (Premium)

All the above PLUS

- Venue co-ordinator throughout the day (pre-ceremony – reception in swing).
This role will:
 - Organise and manage wedding day timeline (based on consultations)
 - Co-ordinate with suppliers' arrival, set up etc.
 - Co-ordinate guest arrivals and seating
 - Keep the day running on schedule
 - Cue music, speeches, cake cutting and first dance
 - Hand over the remainder of the evening to bar shift leader
 - Additional Staff to perform turn venue turn around (meal to reception)
 - Additional consultation (4 total) - The 4th consultation will finalise wedding day timeline for co-ordinator to manage.
- Full Decor Hire Included and Set Up

Tailored Approach

Couples can opt for the basic package with optional extras priced below for a “tailored package”.

Equipment and Services:

- Stage Built: £100.00
- 2x Wireless Mic: (includes set up) £30.00
- Extra Consultation: £50.00
- Venue Co-ordinator (includes one extra consultation): £350.00
- Set up / Pack Down Time (must be evening before / morning after): Group 2 4-hour Session Fee
 - Main Hall £325.50 per session
 - Gallery Room £108.50 per session
 -

Decor:

- White/off white chair covers
 - £3 per chair cover with sash orders over 30
 - Just covers £2.5
- Tablecloths
 - Rounds £8 each
 - Square £8 each
 - Long £9 each
 - Stretch £7 each
 - + £1 per table for satin table runner
- Red Carpet £10

POLICY, GOVERNANCE & FINANCE COMMITTEE



Agenda Item: Skate Park Fencing
Meeting Date: Monday, 22 June 2026
Contact Officer: Head of Estates and Operations

The purpose of this report is to present an assessment of the existing boundary fencing between the skate park and Courtside, identify associated risks, and provide Members with a range of repair and upgrade options for consideration.

Background

The existing boundary fence between the skate park and Courtside has suffered repeated failures, with at least seven panels damaged and repaired. Damage is deliberate and recurring, primarily to have gained access into the Courtside development and remove loose materials for use within the skate park. Inspections identified severely bowed and distorted panels, although the posts remain generally vertical and serviceable.

Current Situation

Site inspections identified the following key risks:

- Public safety risks from broken or deformed mesh, sharp edges, and uncontrolled access between uses.
- Operational risks from the continued repair cycle and potential damage to the glass-walled padel courts.
- The behaviour causing damage appears established and ongoing and is not solely linked to construction activity.

The existing fence technical summary.

- Light-duty welded mesh panels (2440mm x 3020mm full panels).
- Approximate total fence length: 50m (20.5 panels).
- Existing posts are in good condition and serviceable with an anticipated lifespan of 20–30 years in their current configuration.
- Increasing fence height and/or panel strength will increase structural loading and may exceed the original design capacity of the posts.

Options Framework (Note: all costs are estimates and to be confirmed)

Option A: Like-for-Like Repairs

- Replace damaged panels only: £1,200–£1,800
- Extend courtside fence height: £2,000–£2,800
- Extend rear fence height: £1,700–£2,400
- Extend partial rear fence height: £250–£600

Option B: Upgrade to 868 Twin-Wire Mesh

- Courtside replacement with height extension: £3,500–£5,000
- Rear fence replacement with height extension: £3,000–£4,200
- Partial rear replacement with height extension: £800–£1,400
- Front and side fence (golf side) without height extension: £3250–£4600

Option C: Upgrade to 358 Anti-Climb Mesh

- Front and courtside replacement with height extension: £5,000–£7,500
- Rear fence replacement with height extension: £4,500–£6,800
- Partial rear replacement with height extension: £1,200–£2,200

Option D: Structural Post Upgrade

- Upgrade posts to minimum 80x80 RHS: £2,500–£4,000 (add-on to any option)

The fence line between the skatepark and the Courtside hub.



The current sections increased in height matching the existing fencing.



Assessment

While some damage may reduce now that Courtside is fully operational, evidence suggests the existing fencing system is inherently vulnerable at the interface between a skate park and adjacent facilities. Damage has occurred across multiple fence lines, including locations where access to Courtside would not be achieved, indicating a combination of accidental and intentional impacts.

The existing fence has demonstrated repeat failure and remains exposed to skate park impacts, climbing, pushing and pulling loads, and the risk of objects being projected towards Courtside. For this reason, Members have been presented with a range of options from lower-cost repair and height extension through to more robust fencing systems, enabling an informed decision between accepting ongoing maintenance risk or investing in a more durable long-term solution.

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:

1. A Forward Looking Town Council

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 equality impacts identified.
- b) Biodiversity – No significant biodiversity impacts identified.
- c) Crime & Disorder – Improved fencing may reduce unauthorised access, anti-social behaviour and vandalism.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – Replacement works will have limited environmental impact. More durable solutions may reduce future maintenance visits and material use.

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.

The current fencing presents ongoing safety, operational and asset protection risks. Continued reliance on like-for-like repairs is likely to result in recurring maintenance costs and ongoing risk exposure.

Social Value

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

Improved fencing would provide a safer environment for users of both the skate park and Courtside facilities, protecting public assets and supporting community use of the site.

Financial implications

- Indicative costs range from £1,200 for basic repairs, and from approximately £10,500 for security-grade fencing solutions, with structural post upgrades costing an additional £2,500–£4,000 where required.

Recommendations

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

1. Option A: Like for like repairs being the lowest-cost solution, focused on repairs and selective height increases.
2. Option B: 868 Twin-Wire Mesh providing un upgraded more robust fencing.
3. Option C: 358 Anti-Climb Mesh offering the highest security with 358 anti-climb mesh.
4. Option D: Structural Post Upgrade where required

Document is Restricted

Document is Restricted