

## Stronger Communities Committee Meeting of Witney Town Council



**Monday, 15th June, 2026 at 6.00 pm**

To members of the Stronger Communities Committee - T Ashby, G Meadows, A Bailey, D Enright, A Mubin, S Simpson, J Doughty 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](mailto: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 [Stronger Communities Meeting 15.06.2026](#)

### **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](mailto: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 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 - 9)
  - a) To receive and consider the minutes of the Stronger Communities Committee held on 23 March 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 10 - 12)

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

7. **Finance Report** (Pages 13 - 20)

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

8. **Annual Residents Survey Results** (Pages 21 - 29)

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

**Communications**

9. **Communications Report** (Pages 30 - 42)

The Committee received and considered the report of the Communications & Community Engagement Officer (C&CEO).

**Community Engagement**

10. **Community Engagement Report** (Pages 43 - 48)

To receive and consider the report of the Communications & Community Engagement Officer.

a) **Witney Forum Minutes** (Pages 49 - 51)

To receive the minutes of the meeting of the Witney Forum held on XXXX

b) **Special Effect Charity** (Pages 52 - 53)

To receive a letter of thanks from SpecialEffect.

11. **Youth Council** (Pages 54 - 57)

To receive the report of the Communications & Engagement Administrative Assistant.

12. **Youth Council Minutes** (Pages 58 - 60)

To receive the minutes of the Youth Council meeting held on 14.05.2026

13. **Youth Services - TO FOLLOW**

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

**Street Furniture & Infrastructure**

14. **Litter picking cabinets** (Pages 61 - 65)

To receive and consider the report of the Administrative Assistant – Facilities.



Town Clerk

# Agenda Item 4

## STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Monday, 23 March 2026

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

### Present:

Councillor T Ashby (Chair)

Councillors:	R Smith	D Enright
	G Meadows	J Treloar
	D Edwards-Hughes	O Collins (In place of A Bailey)
Officers:	Adam Clapton	Deputy Town Clerk
	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
Others:	James Edney	Youth Development Officer (WODC)

### SC142 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Mubin and A Bailey, Councillor O Collins attended as a substitute for the latter.

### SC143 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members or officers.

### SC144 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Stronger Communities committee held on 26 January 2026 were received.

#### **Resolved:**

That, the minutes of the Stronger Communities committee held on 26 January 2026 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the chair.

### SC145 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

*The Committee adjourned for this item.*

The Committee received representations from James Edney, Youth Development Officer for West Oxfordshire District Council concerning Agenda Item 10

James provided the Committee with an update on actions being taken following the 2022 Youth Needs Assessment, which highlighted ongoing gaps in local youth provision and the need for stronger, more sustainable support for young people. He also provided updates on several other

youth issues affecting the town and potential future projects and available funding opportunities.

*The Committee reconvened.*

*Following his contribution James Edney left the meeting at 6:32pm*

SC146 **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.

**Resolved:**

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the management accounts of the Stronger Communities Committee for the period 31 December 2025 be approved.

SC147 **COMMUNICATIONS REPORT**

The Committee received the report of the Communications & Community Engagement Officer.

Members noted the apparent disappointing delivery rate of the spring newsletter and heard that Officers would follow this up further with the distributor. The Committee looked forward to receiving the results of the annual survey in due course, acknowledging it was still early in the return period.

The Committee welcomed the proposal to include local charity information within the digital newsletter. They also expressed their satisfaction with the successful use of Vevox polling application at the Annual Town Meeting and agreed it should be utilised for future engagement and consultation exercises.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the press coverage since the last meeting be noted and,
3. That, officers investigate the delivery issues with the spring newsletter further with delegated authority to the Deputy Town Clerk to follow up with the distributor as necessary; and
4. That, the Committee consider additional uses of Vevox for future engagement and consultation activities.

SC148 **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Communications & Community Engagement Officer (C&CEO).

The Committee welcomed the plans for the St George's Day event and considered the Council's participation in the Great British Spring Clean. Members agreed unanimously that while the latter initiative should be supported, this should be done virtually by advertising the availability of the Council's litter-picking kits, and that no budget would therefore be allocated for future years.

The Committee was enthusiastic about the request from Thames Valley Orienteering and welcomed the proposal positively. Members also heard the idea to repurpose leftover spring flowers for planting within Windrush Cemetery.

The Committee noted the free domestic-abuse awareness training offered by *Reducing the Risk* and agreed that an invitation should be extended to all Councillors. It was further agreed that the annual Christmas competitions should proceed, with officers again seeking sponsorship for the festive period.

The Committee received an update from a Member regarding the forthcoming visit from Le Touquet and Unterhaching and, subject to approval by Full Council, it was agreed that an informal drinks reception be arranged in the Corn Exchange Café, with a proposed date of 1 May.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the report be noted and;
2. That, the plans for the St George's Day event be noted and welcomed; and
3. That, the Council support the Great British Spring Clean virtually by promoting the availability of litter-picking kits and,
4. That, the request from Thames Valley Orienteering be supported and welcomed; and
5. That, the proposal to use leftover spring flowers for planting at Windrush Cemetery be approved; and
6. That, an invitation to the free domestic-abuse awareness be extended to all Councillors; and
7. That, the Christmas competitions proceed for 2026, and officers seek sponsorship for the festive period; and
8. That, subject to approval by Full Council, an informal drinks reception for the twinning towns be arranged at the Corn Exchange Café for May.

SC149 **WITNEY FORUM MINUTES**

The Committee received the notes of the Witney Forum meeting held on 29 January 2026.

**Resolved:**

That, the minutes of the Witney Forum meeting held on 29 January 2026 be noted.

SC150 **YOUTH COUNCIL MINUTES**

The Committee received the report of the Communications & Engagement Administration Assistant along with the minutes of the Youth Council meeting held on 11 March 2026

Members received an update from a Youth Council Mentor on the recent activity of the Witney Youth Council and were pleased to note that the group was gathering momentum.

Members were advised that the planned *Taste of Witney* event was struggling to attract interest from local restaurants despite the efforts of Youth Council members. In light of this, the Committee discussed potential alternative engagement activities, including the possibility of hosting an event similar to the successful *Pizza and Politics* session previously delivered by Oxfordshire County Council, should the *Taste of Witney* event not come to fruition.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the verbal update be noted and
2. That, the minutes of the Youth Council meeting held on 11 March 2026 be noted and,
3. That, officers and Youth Council members explore an alternative event, such as a *Pizza and Politics*-style session, should the *Taste of Witney* event not proceed due to limited restaurant engagement.

SC151 **WITNEY: PAST PRESENT & FUTURE WORKING PARTY**

The Committee received the report of the minutes of the working party meeting held on 18 February 2026.

Members welcomed confirmation of the events to be held on St Georges Day and the weekend to follow and thanked officers for their work and the posters advertising the event. Additionally, they acknowledged the arrangements for the follow up meeting for residents to provide feedback which was scheduled to be held on 23 May 2026 in the Corn Exchange.

**Resolved:**

That, the minutes of the Witney Past, Present & Future Working Party meeting held on 18 February 2026 be noted.

SC152 **YOUTH SERVICES**

During the public participation item earlier in the meeting the committee had verbal update from James Edney, Youth Development Officer at WODC regarding his work which built on the findings of the Youth Needs Assessment carried out in 2022.

James had outlined the key issues identified in the assessment, particularly the gaps in youth provision and the challenges faced by organisations delivering services for young people. James explained how his work involves supporting and connecting local groups through the West Oxfordshire Youth Partnership. He advised that much of his focus was on helping organisations strengthen their capacity, improve collaboration, and work towards more stable and secure long-term provision for young people.

Members noted with concern that James' role was funded on a one-year fixed-term contract, which created uncertainty around the ability to deliver sustainable, long-term projects. This concern was amplified by the potential implications of any future move toward unitary authority control.

The Committee also discussed current youth club provision in Witney. It was acknowledged that some provision existed at St Mary's Church, Welcome Church, and through the detached youth outreach delivered by The Station; however, Members agreed that additional provision may be needed to address gaps highlighted in the Youth Needs Assessment.

James had also updated the Committee on a developing campaign addressing violence against women and girls (VAWG). He outlined proposals to work with a theatre company to deliver awareness-raising sessions focused on issues such as unwanted attention. Members were pleased to hear that the initiative had received support from Oxfordshire County Council, West

Oxfordshire District Council and Thames Valley Police, with £25,000 of a targeted £50,000 in funding secured to date.

In addition to the verbal update provided by James, the Committee received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk concerning the forthcoming launch of the Youth Services Grant.

Members reviewed the proposed timescale for the application and assessment process and agreed unanimously that the evaluation of applications should follow the same approach as the previous year, with delegated authority to a group consisting of the Leader, Deputy Leader, the Chair of this Committee, and the Deputy Town Clerk.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the evaluation of Youth Services grants proceeds under the delegation listed above.

SC153 **WITNEY TOWN CENTRE FORUM**

The Committee received an update from the Deputy Town Clerk advising that invitations to relevant stakeholders had been issued in order to reestablish the Town Centre Forum.

Members were informed that a provisional date of 7 April had been set for the first meeting.

**Resolved:**

That, the update on the issuing of invitations and the proposed date of the first Town Centre Forum meeting be noted.

SC154 **WODC CONSULTATION - PROPOSED CONTROLS RELATING TO DOG FOULING**

The Committee received a verbal update from Officers confirming that the forthcoming consultation had been postponed by West Oxfordshire District Council due to the upcoming election period.

**Resolved:**

That, the update on the postponement of the consultation by West Oxfordshire District Council be noted.

SC155 **WITNEY TOWN CENTRE IMPROVEMENTS**

The Committee received a verbal update from the Deputy Town Clerk on the progress of West Oxfordshire District Council regarding town centre improvement matters.

Members were advised that proposals from WODC for a bench outside the Shake Shop and additional bin stores were progressing, with the town councils Head of Estates & Operations continuing to liaise directly with WODC on these matters.

In relation to the unspent Section 106 (S106) funding designation for the Town Centre, Officers confirmed that the S106 Officer had advised that the Town Council's proposal for a parklet fell outside the geographical area covered by the available funding. Members noted that WODC had

requested further information and agreed that this could be considered further at a future meeting of the Witney Town Centre Forum, recognising that any such proposal would need to be fully costed, researched and, if progressed, potentially delivered by the Town Council.

Members also discussed wider wayfinding opportunities within the town and considered whether these could incorporate an arts trail as part of a cohesive approach to town centre navigation. It was suggested that a themed concept, such as a “sheep trail”, may be an engaging option. It was agreed that these ideas also be deferred to the Witney Town Centre Forum for further exploration.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the verbal update be noted; and
2. That, further discussion on potential town centre improvement opportunities, including the parklet proposal, be referred to the Witney Town Centre Forum, noting that any future proposals would require full costing, research and potential delivery by the Town Council; and
3. That, the consideration of enhanced wayfinding options, including the potential for an arts trail or a themed “sheep trail”, be deferred to the Witney Town Centre Forum for further discussion.

SC156 **THIRD PARTY EVENTS**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Venue & Events Officer which provided details of the past and upcoming events held on the Council’s land.

**Resolved**

That, the report be noted and updates be welcomed.

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The meeting closed at: 7.33 pm

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Chair

## STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE



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**Agenda Item:** Terms of Reference

**Meeting Date:** Monday, 15<sup>th</sup> June 2026

**Contact Officer:** Deputy Town Clerk

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

### Background

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

### Current Situation

The current terms of reference for this Committee are:

- a) To acknowledge and promote the value and contributions of voluntary groups, local organisations, and community interest companies that deliver social value to our community—supporting and facilitating services, whether through partnerships or ad hoc arrangements, in accordance with relevant policies and legislation;
- b) To oversee community engagement with all residents of Witney, relevant stake holders and businesses, including, but not limited to conducting an annual resident satisfaction survey to gauge feedback;
- c) To recognise the importance of inclusivity by ensuring all voices in the community are heard and represented, advocating for underrepresented groups in line with equality legislation;
- d) To engage proactively with young people, supporting and promoting youth services where possible, and to oversee the operations of the Witney Youth Council;
- e) To oversee and maintain the infrastructure owned by the Town Council, including street furniture in the town centre (e.g. seating, litter bins, and salt bins), bus shelters, CCTV, noticeboards, and Christmas light displays;
- f) To organise and deliver civic events, such as Remembrance, in line with the approved programme and within the budget set by the Council;
- g) To work in collaboration with other partnerships on town wide events such as the Christmas Lights switch-on and others that may arise from time to time;
- h) To co-ordinate national commemorations, special community events, and initiatives in accordance with the Council's agreed programme and budget;
- i) To oversee the Council's communications and publications, including the website, newsletter, and social media platforms;
- j) To administer the Children & Young People Grant funds, considering applications and/or funding on an annual basis and making recommendations to the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee;
- k) To oversee the local Schools in Bloom competition and the Council's entry into the regional In Bloom Competition;

- l) Within all its decision making ensure that the green environment and biodiversity is protected and enhanced in line with the Council's Climate Emergency aspirations;
- m) The Membership of the Committee shall consist of 6 Members plus the Town Mayor and The Leader of the Council ex officio with voting rights;
- n) The quorum of the Committee shall be 4 Members.

The Committee is asked if it would like to make any amendments to the terms for the forthcoming municipal year.

## **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 – see text in report (c) and (d)
- b) Biodiversity – no direct implications.
- c) Crime & Disorder - no direct implications.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency - see text in the report.

## **Risk**

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

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

## **Social Value**

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

The Stronger Communities Committee delivers social value by supporting local organisations, promoting community cohesion, and addressing the needs of residents. Through grant funding, partnership working, and community initiatives, it helps reduce isolation, improve wellbeing, encourage civic participation, and strengthen the resilience and inclusivity of the local community.

## **Financial implications**

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

## **Recommendations**

Members are invited to note the report and;

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

## STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE



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**Agenda Item:** Finance Report  
**Meeting Date:** Monday 15 June 2026  
**Contact Officer:** Responsible Financial Officer

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***Should Members have any queries about this report advance notice would be appreciated, in writing, by 9am on the day of the meeting to allow for a full response at the meeting.***

The purpose of this report is to present to the Committee the draft management accounts for the services delivered by this Committee during the financial year 2025-26.

### Background

Detailed income and expenditure statements for budgets which are the responsibility of this committee are attached. The period to which this report relates is 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026.

### Current Situation

The draft management accounts being presented are those for 2025-26. The cost centres for which this committee has responsibility are:

Cost centre	Service
402	Community Infrastructure
408	Community Activities

Steady progress is being made on closing down the 2025-26 accounts ahead of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return being drafted for approval at the Council meeting on 22 June. However, before this date there are likely to be further adjustments made which will affect the final management accounts for the cost centres which are the responsibility of this committee. Therefore, Members may notice some differences to some of the figures when they are presented to the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee later in the cycle.

There is further work planned in relation to adjustments to earmarked reserve movements. Adjustments have been undertaken so the financial accounts are in accordance with AGAR requirements.

A full commentary on the budget lines was undertaken as part of the budget process. Members may wish to note the following:

1. There will be some codes where the year-to-date figure in 2025-26 now exceeds the projected figure for the year. This is to be expected as the projections were the best

estimates made in September/ October and clearly matters move on. Equally there will be other codes where not all the projected budgets will be required. Virements (transfers) between budgets are made where they can be justified but overall there are no budget lines which cause concern.

2. As reported previously was a change to Committee responsibilities earlier in the financial year which affects the Stronger Communities Committee and its management accounts.

Within the terms of reference for the Climate and Biodiversity Committee there are a number of responsibilities budgetary provision for which were previously under the remit of this Committee. These are, referenced directly from the Committee terms of reference for 2025-26:

*(b) To manage the Council's Environmental Spaces, including Amenity Areas...*

*c) To oversee the management of the Council's tree stock across the town;*

*h) To oversee the maintenance of the Council's infrastructure concerning planting displays (including hanging baskets).*

As a consequence, the following budget lines have been transferred to the Climate and Biodiversity Committee:

402 – Community Infrastructure, nominal ledger codes – 4017, 4036, 4037, 4039, 4040, 4066, 4067, 4888, 4890, 4892, 4893 and 4899.

This resulted in a virement in relation to the 2025/26 original budget amounted to £238,491.

3. There are differences to note on the treatment of EMRs which are made between the budget cycle and the production of the final management accounts. This is due to limitations in relation to the reports produced by the Council's accounting software.

During the budget cycle, in order to represent proposed EMR movements within the "Projected" figures column for the year transfers from the EMRs are shown against line 4495; transfers to EMRs are represented by retaining the original budget, thus impacting the General Fund, and then at 31 March 2026 underspends may be transferred to the reserve, where appropriate. This is done in this way because the software does not include a column for earmarked reserve movements within the "Projected" estimates for the current year.

However, at year end this treatment has to be reversed and movements are represented as follows:

- (i) Where in-year expenditure is funded from the EMR – line 6000/ cost centre. This is one figure for the whole cost centre rather than showing as accruing to specific codes.
- (ii) Where in-year income (e.g. unspent grants) is transferred to the EMR – line 6001/ cost centre. Again, this is one figure for the whole cost centre rather than showing as accruing to specific codes.
- (iii) Where budget is not spent during the year but is transferred to an EMR for future expenditure then the transfer is from the General Fund to the EMR. It will not show against the cost centre or the committee, as it does not relate to actual expenditure during the year.

I am looking at ways ahead of the budget cycle to address this issue and to make the transfers easier to track within the reports. The solution is likely to export reports from the accounting software into Excel where it can be amended to suit the requirements of the Council.

It is not easy to explain the above issues in this written report so if the above is difficult to follow then the main point at this stage is to be aware of the differences in terms of the treatment of the EMRs during the budget and the changes at year-end.

4. During 2025-26 the Committee's services were delivered within agreed budgets. The original budget, following earmarked reserve movements, was revised down from £308,288 (column headed 2025-26 Total) to £264,503 (column headed 2025-26 Projected) during the budget cycle. The draft actual net expenditure (column headed 2025-26 Actual YTD), following earmarked reserve movements, was £278,932.

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

## **Social Value**

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

## **Financial implications**

This report forms part of the Council's due diligence and a process in line with its Financial Regulations. The financial implications are detailed above and also in the attached income and expenditure statements.

This report forms part of the Council's mechanisms for budgetary control, as it enables income and expenditure incurred to be reviewed and to be compared with the Council's budgets.

## **Recommendations**

Members are invited to note the report and further

1. To approve the report and the draft management accounts of the Committee's services for the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026.

Annual Budget - By Committee (Actual YTD Month 12)

Note: Stronger Communities Committee, 15th June 2026: Draft management accounts for 2025-26

		<u>2024-25 Final</u>		<u>2025-26 Draft</u>				<u>Estimate 2026-27</u>		
		Budget	Actual	Total	Actual YTD	Projected	Committed	Agreed	EMR	Carried Forward
<b><u>Stronger Communities</u></b>										
<b>402</b>	<b><u>COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE</u></b>									
1052	EXPENSES RECOVERED	1,336	500	1,350	0	500	0	1,000	0	0
1099	MISCELLANEOUS INCOME	0	1,000	0	1,500	1,000	0	1,000	0	0
1170	GRANTS RECEIVED	0	5,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1171	DONATIONS RECEIVED	1,334	2,665	10,350	4,800	4,800	0	7,500	0	0
	<b>Total Income</b>	<b>2,670</b>	<b>9,165</b>	<b>11,700</b>	<b>6,300</b>	<b>6,300</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>9,500</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
4014	ELECTRICITY	3,411	3,323	3,400	2,663	2,300	0	2,100	0	0
4017	CONTRACT CLEAN/WASTE	3,000	169	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4025	INSURANCE	112	112	115	112	112	0	150	0	0
4028	I.T.	0	117	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4035	BUS SHELTER MAINTENANCE	3,000	484	3,000	303	1,500	0	3,000	0	0
4036	PROPERTY MAINTENANCE	2,630	1,490	2,600	137	1,400	0	2,600	0	0
4037	GROUNDS MAINTENANCE	3,000	646	1,500	401	900	0	1,557	0	0
4039	HORTICULTURE	19,500	16,277	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4040	ARBORICULTURE	20,000	11,735	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4066	TREE REPLACEMENT	8,000	6,159	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4067	Tree Survey	8,000	6,845	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4105	XMAS LIGHTS, TREE & INFRASTRUC	55,000	55,337	48,500	50,510	48,500	0	50,300	0	0
4113	XMAS SOCIAL CONTRN - SEE 1099	0	750	0	1,500	1,000	0	1,000	0	0
4166	DEFIBRILLATOR EXPENDITURE	4,000	1,685	4,000	377	1,800	0	4,000	0	0
4200	STREET FURNITURE	5,000	7,047	5,000	6,953	6,000	0	5,000	0	0
4210	CHURCH CLOCK	1,500	0	1,500	154	625	0	1,500	0	0
4215	IN BLOOM - INC SCHOOLS CHALLENGE	7,250	2,346	3,500	3,974	4,750	0	3,500	0	0

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Annual Budget - By Committee (Actual YTD Month 12)

Note: Stronger Communities Committee, 15th June 2026: Draft management accounts for 2025-26

		<u>2024-25 Final</u>		<u>2025-26 Draft</u>				<u>Estimate 2026-27</u>		
		Budget	Actual	Total	Actual YTD	Projected	Committed	Agreed	EMR	Carried Forward
4495	TFR FROM EARMARKED R	0	0	0	0	-18,307	0	0	0	0
4888	O/S STAFF RECHARGE	161,845	91,284	15,000	8,087	9,741	0	16,715	0	0
4890	O/S O'HEAD RECHARGE	43,819	8,565	977	641	401	0	988	0	0
4892	C/S STAFF RCHG	18,431	17,824	10,681	12,567	10,418	0	10,160	0	0
4893	C/S O'HEAD RCHG	5,214	6,201	2,820	3,710	2,609	0	2,909	0	0
4899	DEPOT REALLOCATION	15,763	19,619	2,133	1,447	1,470	0	2,478	0	0
4990	CONTRN TO CCTV SCH.	10,000	10,000	11,267	10,000	11,267	0	11,591	0	0
	<b>Overhead Expenditure</b>	<b>398,475</b>	<b>268,013</b>	<b>115,993</b>	<b>103,536</b>	<b>86,486</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>119,548</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
	<b>402 Net Income over Expenditure</b>	<b>-395,805</b>	<b>-258,847</b>	<b>-104,293</b>	<b>-97,236</b>	<b>-80,186</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-110,048</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
6000	plus Transfer from EMR	0	-2,047	0	1,953	0	0	0	0	0
6001	less Transfer to EMR	0	5,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	<b>Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve</b>	<b>(395,805)</b>	<b>(265,894)</b>	<b>(104,293)</b>	<b>(95,283)</b>	<b>(80,186)</b>		<b>(110,048)</b>		
<b>408</b>	<b>COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES</b>									
1099	MISCELLANEOUS INCOME	0	26	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
1170	GRANTS RECEIVED	0	1,500	1,500	150	0	0	1,557	0	0
1171	DONATIONS RECEIVED	0	0	0	2	2	0	0	0	0
	<b>Total Income</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,526</b>	<b>1,500</b>	<b>152</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1,557</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
4001	SALARIES	4,888	5,022	15,118	6,393	6,324	0	7,197	0	0
4002	ER'S NIC	498	482	1,949	821	811	0	929	0	0
4003	ER'S SUPERANN	1,061	1,004	3,281	1,385	1,372	0	1,432	0	0
4103	GRANT YOUTH COUNCIL	1,350	81	1,350	0	1,350	0	500	0	0
4104	GRANT CARNIVAL/XMAS ROTARY CLB	4,500	4,900	4,900	5,075	5,075	0	5,100	0	0
4106	GRANT - PLAY DAY	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	0	1,000	0	0

Continued on next page

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## Annual Budget - By Committee (Actual YTD Month 12)

Note: Stronger Communities Committee, 15th June 2026: Draft management accounts for 2025-26

		<u>2024-25 Final</u>		<u>2025-26 Draft</u>				<u>Estimate 2026-27</u>		
		Budget	Actual	Total	Actual YTD	Projected	Committed	Agreed	EMR	Carried Forward
4109	BLUE PLAQUES	0	525	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4111	WATER SAFETY/EDUCATION	2,000	0	2,000	0	2,000	0	2,000	0	0
4112	GRANT - WITNEY TOWN BAND	660	660	660	660	660	0	660	0	0
4141	EVENTS	10,000	4,961	6,977	6,344	12,407	0	7,500	0	0
4147	50th Anniversary Grants	0	1,100	0	50	50	0	0	0	0
4148	VE/ VJ 80th Anniversary comm'n	1,500	862	2,023	2,271	2,269	0	0	0	0
4149	WTC 50th ANNIVERSARY	5,000	3,332	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4154	EXPERIENCE OXFORDSHIRE M'SHIP	1,200	0	1,200	0	0	0	0	0	0
4160	TOWN TWINNING	500	0	500	0	500	0	500	0	0
4161	TOWN TWINNING ROOM HIRE	500	0	500	58	500	0	500	0	0
4167	BUS SERVICE	21,000	23,500	23,500	26,000	26,000	0	26,000	0	0
4169	CHILDREN & YOUTH PROVISION	40,000	30,200	0	18,600	29,800	0	20,000	0	0
4170	ADVENT FAYRE	2,000	2,064	1,000	1,650	1,000	0	1,000	0	0
4172	GRANT - DETACHED YOUTH WORK	0	0	18,000	18,000	18,000	0	28,500	0	0
4173	GRANT - HOME START	0	0	11,000	11,000	11,000	0	12,000	0	0
4495	TFR FROM EARMARKED R	0	0	0	0	-40,000	0	0	0	0
4892	C/S STAFF RCHG	73,721	71,310	85,443	80,021	83,333	0	81,268	0	0
4893	C/S O'HEAD RCHG	20,857	24,799	25,094	23,073	20,868	0	23,267	0	0
	<b>Overhead Expenditure</b>	<b>192,235</b>	<b>175,801</b>	<b>205,495</b>	<b>202,401</b>	<b>184,319</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>219,353</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
	<b>408 Net Income over Expenditure</b>	<b>-192,235</b>	<b>-174,275</b>	<b>-203,995</b>	<b>-202,249</b>	<b>-184,317</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>-217,796</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
6000	plus Transfer from EMR	0	0	0	18,600	0	0	0	0	0
	<b>Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve</b>	<b>(192,235)</b>	<b>(174,275)</b>	<b>(203,995)</b>	<b>(183,649)</b>	<b>(184,317)</b>		<b>(217,796)</b>		

Continued on next page

Annual Budget - By Committee (Actual YTD Month 12)

Note: Stronger Communities Committee, 15th June 2026: Draft management accounts for 2025-26

	<u>2024-25 Final</u>		<u>2025-26 Draft</u>				<u>Estimate 2026-27</u>		
	Budget	Actual	Total	Actual YTD	Projected	Committed	Agreed	EMR	Carried Forward
<b>Stronger Communities - Income</b>	2,670	10,691	13,200	6,452	6,302	0	11,057	0	0
<b>Expenditure</b>	590,710	443,813	321,488	305,937	270,805	0	338,901	0	0
<b>Net Income over Expenditure</b>	<u>-588,040</u>	<u>-433,122</u>	<u>-308,288</u>	<u>-299,485</u>	<u>-264,503</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>-327,844</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
plus Transfer from EMR	0	(2,047)	0	20,553	0	0	0	0	0
less Transfer to EMR	0	5,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve</b>	<u>(588,040)</u>	<u>(440,169)</u>	<u>(308,288)</u>	<u>(278,932)</u>	<u>(264,503)</u>		<u>(327,844)</u>		
<b>Total Budget Income</b>	2,670	10,691	13,200	6,452	6,302	0	11,057	0	0
<b>Expenditure</b>	590,710	443,813	321,488	305,937	270,805	0	338,901	0	0
<b>Net Income over Expenditure</b>	<u>-588,040</u>	<u>-433,122</u>	<u>-308,288</u>	<u>-299,485</u>	<u>-264,503</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>-327,844</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
plus Transfer from EMR	0	(2,047)	0	20,553	0	0	0	0	0
less Transfer to EMR	0	5,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve</b>	<u>(588,040)</u>	<u>(440,169)</u>	<u>(308,288)</u>	<u>(278,932)</u>	<u>(264,503)</u>		<u>(327,844)</u>		

## STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE



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**Agenda Item:** Annual Resident’s Survey 2026

**Meeting Date:** Monday, 15<sup>th</sup> June 2026

**Contact Officer:** Deputy Town Clerk  
(Administrative Support Assistant – Communities & Engagement)

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

### Background

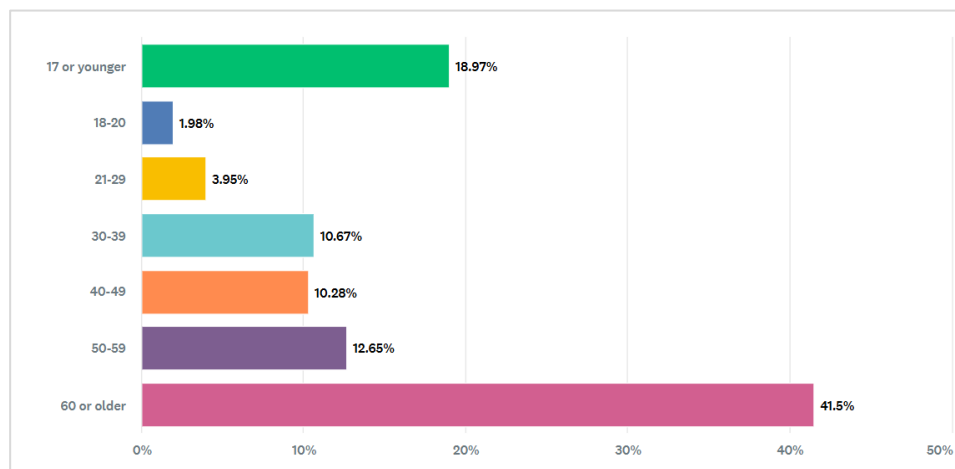
The survey was sent to every household in the post and was promoted online via social media and in the local secondary schools; 272 responses were received in total.

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

### Current Situation

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

### Respondent Age Demographics



## Survey Scores Overall

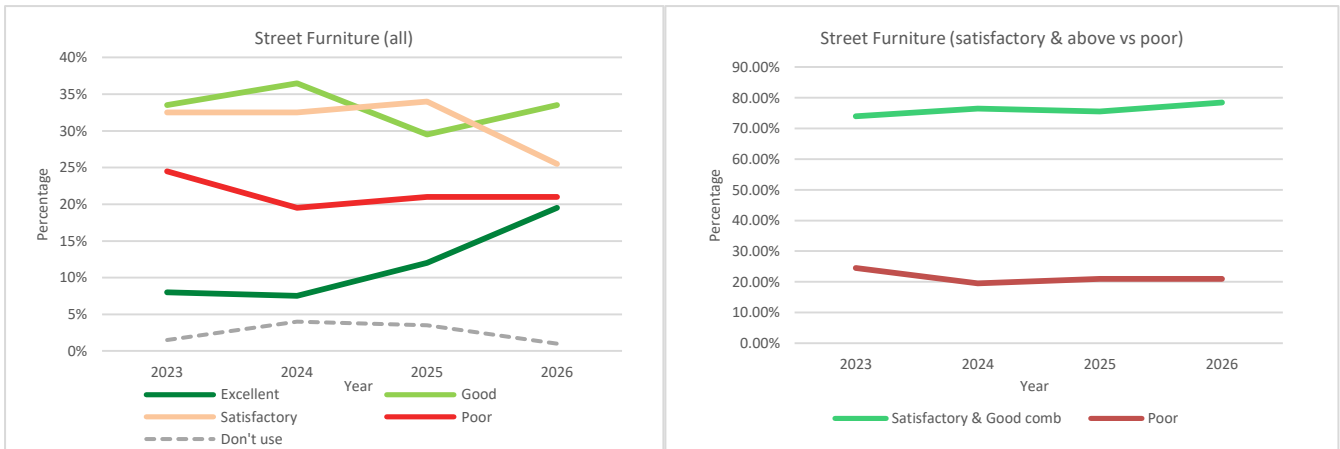
The following table shows how the services scored overall in the survey (with percentages rounded).

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

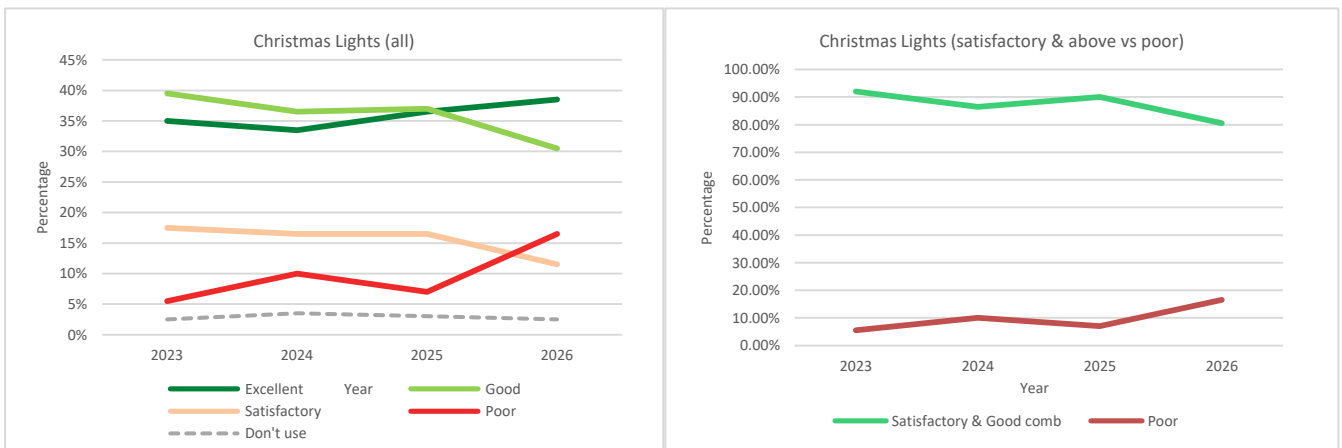
Service	Year	Excellent	Good	Satisfactory	% comb	Poor	Don't use	Resp
Street Furniture (bins/benches/bus shelters)	2026	19.5% (52)	33.5% (90)	25.5% (68)	<b>78.50%</b>	21% (56)	1% (3)	269
	2025	12% (42)	29.5% (100)	34% (116)	<b>75.50%</b>	21% (71)	3.5% (12)	341
	2024	7.5% (32)	36.5% (158)	32.5% (141)	<b>76.50%</b>	19.5% (84)	4% (17)	432
	2023	8% (17)	33.5% (73)	32.5% (71)	<b>74.00%</b>	24.5% (54)	1.5% (4)	219
Christmas Lights Display	2026	38.5% (104)	30.5% (83)	11.5% (31)	<b>80.50%</b>	16.5% (45)	2.5% (7)	270
	2025	36.5% (125)	37% (126)	16.5% (56)	<b>90.00%</b>	7% (24)	3% (10)	341
	2024	33.5% (146)	36.5% (160)	16.5% (72)	<b>86.50%</b>	10% (43)	3.5% (16)	437
	2023	35% (76)	39.5% (86)	17.5% (38)	<b>92.00%</b>	5.5% (12)	2.5% (6)	218
Civic Events (e.g. Remembrance & Mayor's Carols)	2026	23.5%(64)	30% (81)	11% (30)	<b>64.50%</b>	3% (8)	32% (87)	270
	2025	21% (71)	32% (110)	16.5% (56)	<b>69.50%</b>	5.5% (18)	25% (86)	341
	2024	16.5% (72)	34% (149)	19% (83)	<b>69.50%</b>	4.5% (19)	26% (112)	435
	2023	24% (52)	33% (72)	18.5% (40)	<b>75.50%</b>	6% (13)	18.5% (40)	217
Community Events (e.g. Play Days, coffee mornings)	2026	8% (21)	18.5% (49)	8.5% (23)	<b>35.00%</b>	4% (11)	61% (164)	268
	2025	5.5% (19)	18% (62)	14% (47)	<b>37.50%</b>	7.5% (26)	55% (186)	340
	2024	8.5% (36)	22.5% (98)	13.5% (60)	<b>44.50%</b>	8% (34)	47.5% (208)	436
	2023	7% (14)	21.5% (44)	16% (33)	<b>44.50%</b>	7.5% (15)	48% (99)	205
Communication	2026	6.5% (18)	23% (62)	39.5% (105)	<b>69.00%</b>	18% (48)	12.5% (34)	267
	2025	8% (28)	28% (94)	25.5% (87)	<b>61.50%</b>	22.5% (76)	16% (54)	339
	2024	8% (35)	35% (149)	27% (116)	<b>70.00%</b>	16% (68)	14% (60)	428
	2023	12.5% (23)	31% (56)	28.5% (52)	<b>72.00%</b>	18.5% (34)	9.5% (17)	182

The following graphs track performance over the previous four years for these services and show the levels are broadly the same in the previous three years.

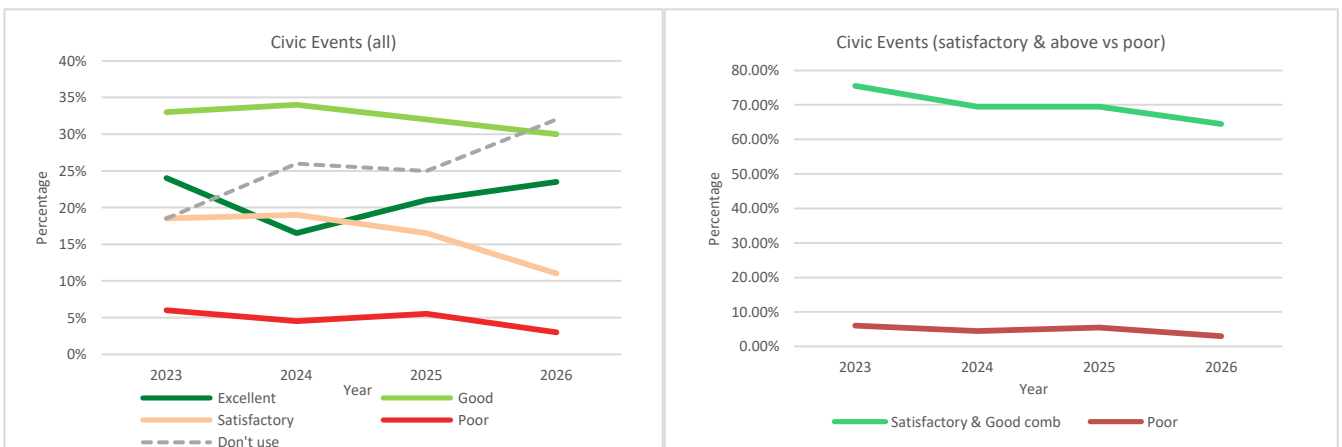
### Street Furniture infographics



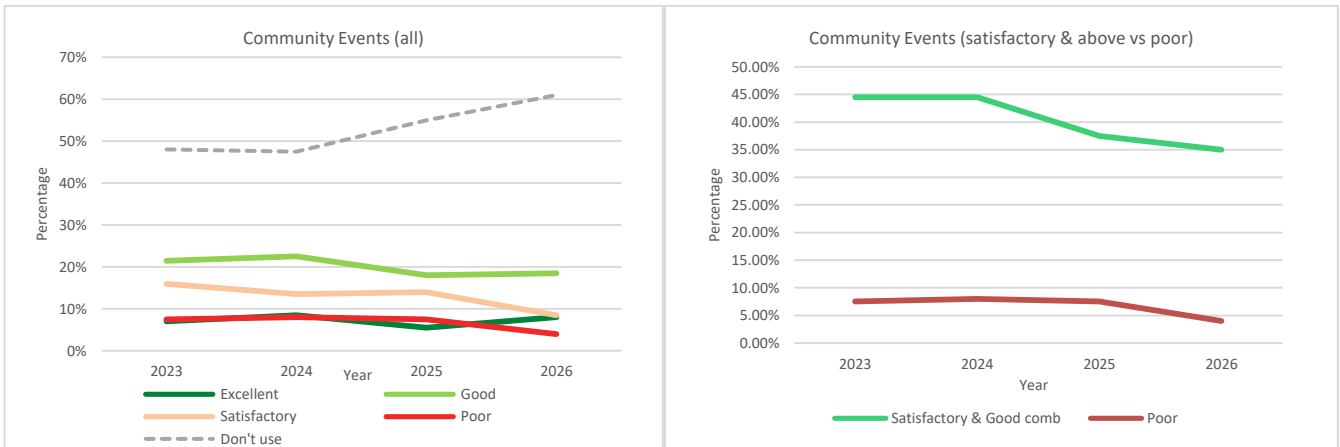
### Christmas Lights infographics



### Civic Events infographics



## Community Events infographics



## Communications infographics



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

### Street Furniture & Christmas Lights

- The bus shelters do not shelter us from the rain and many stops do not have a shelter - especially out of town stops.”
  - “Too much graffiti is left in situ. Litter never gets collected from side streets. Many of the bins and street furniture covered in old adverts and are dilapidated.”
  - “Benches need repairing. Xmas lights are vibrant and bring the town to life.”
  - “Christmas lights not as good as previous years.”

- “I am a young resident of Witney and am writing on behalf of myself and my friends about something that matters to us and the future of Witney. Right now, there are very few affordable places where young people can safely meet, spend time and feel welcome. Most cafes and shops in town are aimed at adults or are too expensive for us to use. Without safe welcoming hangouts, we often end up with nowhere to go after school or on the weekends. We’re not asking for handouts. We’re asking for Witney to be a town where young people can belong.”
- “Loved the Christmas lights this year.”
- “Christmas lights are the only thing worth paying for IMHO”
- “I’m a student at Woodgreen, I have lived in Witney since I was born. I’ve found that it is so much nicer going on walks here than I thought, because of the gorgeous places to walk like Witney lake, and the flowers that just liven up everything in a wonderful way. I’m really grateful that everyone in town is so kind and approachable and I like to go to the park all the time with my friends”
- “Christmas lights looked ace last couple of years”
- “Most of my experience is Good and satisfies me however, there are occasions where furniture and other services are poor and not up to standard, this is either it being dirty or non-existent where should be. This could be improved by adding more of these public services and entertainment opportunities maybe using public fields and parks etc etc i.e oxlease park and field for events such as bouncy castle and bbq or other stuff on those lines, this could improve the community engagement throughout the town.”
- “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.”
- “Christmas light were poor last year.”

#### Community Events & Civic Events

- “St Georges day was great - bring on the elections.”

- “More community events would be good, it helps create a sense of community. The splash park should be switched on when the weather is good earlier in the year Some of the smaller parks could do with more equipment ( have a drive round somewhere like ambroseden and see all the little parks) During Covid when market square was full of tables and chairs and the pubs and restaurants were allowed outside seating it was so lovely, during the summer it felt like being abroad and there was a buzzing little atmosphere. Witney has such a great community that can be enhanced by promoting and providing the opportunity to come together. Every year Bicester does a ‘big lunch’ it’s well advertised and everyone is encouraged to bring a picnic together, this could be done on a summer afternoon at the leys, perhaps get Witney radio to provide music and make it an annual event?”
- “A rich variety of events for all ages. Loved the VJ Day & Christmas afternoon tea.”
- “Remembrance Day is good, love it when the town comes together for events like this.”
- “Fantastic ambience at the St Georges Day celebrations - same every year please! Can the scouts come?”
- “Good to see more events being held.”
- “Could have more hymn sheets printed for Remembrance Day.”
- “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.”

### Communications

- “Do newsletters to address in witney”
- “Your leaflets are hard to read for colour blind.”
- “Stop trying to make everyone go digital”
- “Lived in Witney since '89 - 37 years - 1st comms in all that time! Went into your info centre a few years ago - RE RBL - couldn't help - Data Protection Act!”

- “Why is there no information re the work being carried out at the Leys. A poster in your shopwindow would be something.”
- “It would be nice to hear more about what's happening in our town.”
- “My mother lives in Ducklington and receives an excellent newsletter every month. Witney Town Council communicates with residents very little in contrast with no newsletter I am aware of.”
- “Everything is good but we don't shout about it. Things could be better, like the lake’s signage to and from, events in Witney to get involved in”

## **Analysis**

### Street Furniture

Street furniture continues to receive broadly positive feedback, with combined “satisfactory and above” responses increasing slightly to 78.5% in 2026. The proportion of “excellent” ratings has also increased significantly compared to previous years, suggesting improvements are being recognised by residents. However, concerns remain regarding the condition and maintenance of benches, bus shelters, bins, graffiti, and litter in public spaces.

As the Town Council is responsible for the majority of public seating, general feedback has been included in this report.

### Christmas Lights

The Christmas Lights display remains one of the Council’s highest-rated services, with over 80% of respondents rating the service satisfactory or above. Many comments praised the atmosphere and vibrancy the lights bring to the town, with several residents noting improvements in recent years.

### Civic Events

Civic Events continue to receive strong levels of support from residents, particularly for traditional events such as Remembrance commemorations and St George’s Day celebrations. Comments frequently reference the positive sense of community created by these events and appreciation for opportunities to bring residents together.

### Community Events

Community Events continue to record lower engagement levels than other services, with 61% of respondents selecting “don’t use” in 2026. Satisfaction levels have also declined slightly compared with previous years. However, comments from residents who do attend events are generally positive and highlight the value of activities that encourage community participation and improve the atmosphere within the town.

## Communication

Communication scores have improved compared with 2025, particularly in “satisfactory” responses, although the service remains one of the Council’s lower-performing areas overall. Comments suggest residents would like more regular and accessible updates regarding Council activities, projects, and events, including printed newsletters, clearer project information, and non-digital communication methods.

It should also be noted that 41% of the 272 survey responses came from residents aged 60 and over, who may be more likely to favour traditional forms of communication. In addition, the survey itself as a physical newsletter distributed to households across Witney may also have influenced the response demographic and preference towards printed communication. The Committee may therefore wish to consider how best to balance digital and non-digital communications to reach a broad range of residents.

## **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 building 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.

## STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE



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<b>Agenda Item:</b>	Communications Report
<b>Meeting Date:</b>	Monday, 15 <sup>th</sup> June 2026
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Communications and Community Engagement Officer

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The purpose of this report is to update councillors on various communication matters.

### Current Situation

#### 2026 Spring Newsletter and Survey

The decision was taken that the invoice from the distribution company should be paid in full. They had cooperated fully throughout the process, providing tracking data and regular updates. Overall, performance was considered comparable to last year's Royal Mail distribution, while achieving a more targeted delivery to households within Witney's boundary and avoiding unnecessary distribution to business premises.

Survey response levels were slightly lower than in 2025. This was largely due to significantly fewer responses being received via schools, with approximately 50 returned this year compared with around 200 in 2024 and 100 in 2025. The Administrative Assistant Communications and Engagement has collated the survey returns from under 18s and these are presented in **Appendix A**

It is also likely that survey fatigue contributed to reduced participation, as two separate surveys were included within the same newsletter, which may have discouraged some recipients from completing either.

The lower response rate highlighted limited engagement from younger age groups. The C&CE Officer has explored ways to improve engagement with residents aged 18–30, who are most effectively reached through digital channels and social activities. This demographic generally responds best to concise, accessible communications and consultations that clearly demonstrate how feedback will influence decisions.

Consideration could be given to a retro and contemporary gaming event with a community engagement element. This could provide an opportunity to gather feedback on Council priorities and the types of events, performances and screenings younger residents would like to see. As many residents in this age group are also parents, family-friendly and accessible formats should be considered.

Previous engagement activities at the Carnival had successfully used coloured stickers to gather feedback on preferred options for the Splash Park redesign. This approach proved highly inclusive, enabling even very young children to participate and express their preferences. Similar simple, visual engagement methods could be considered for future

consultations to encourage participation from a wider range of age groups, and we recommend using this as the most likely to engage way of presenting this year's survey there. No questions will be changed as this would skew results.

We do also have VEVOX but with no power supply this could only be presented as a QR code.

### **WhatsApp channel proposal**

Councillors will have received a link to our proposed WhatsApp channel. The link is below and the information we will use to launch the new social media feed, if adopted, is also presented.

<https://whatsapp.com/channel/0029VbCs9wh4Y9IjF515Jv24>

We're now on WhatsApp Channels!

Want important council updates delivered straight to your phone? Follow our new WhatsApp Channel to stay informed quickly and easily.

### **What is a WhatsApp Channel?**

A WhatsApp Channel is a one-way broadcast feed. This means:

- Your information remains private – no one can see your phone number or personal details.
- You can follow and view our updates.
- Only we can post messages.
- You cannot reply or message us through the Channel.

It is designed to provide simple, reliable updates – no chats, no group messages, and no spam.

### **What we'll share:**

- Urgent service updates and emergency notices
- Important local announcements
- Meeting dates and agendas
- Community events and consultations
- Local roadworks and service updates

All delivered straight to your phone in real time. To follow us, simply click the link below and select Follow.

### **Town Guide (Biannual)**

Until around 2011, Witney Town Council commissioned an externally produced Town Guide through Local Authority Publishing (despite the name, this was not a government-backed organisation, but a commercial publisher). The arrangement was subsequently discontinued by the Town Council.

Over the past year, we have been working on developing a similar resource for the Council's website. This was originally proposed as a paper project. Progress has been slower than anticipated, as considerable time is needed to ensure the format is appropriate, user-friendly, and of a manageable size for online storage and display.

Officers have just received a new proposal for an official Town Guide from an established publisher that provides a number of these nationally. This proposal outlines how town guides can be produced and distributed to promote local communities, with zero cost (advertising is intended to pay for the production) and flexible involvement. Please see below and in full detail in **Appendix B**.

- The publisher is responsible for generating the advertising revenue. Guides are free to the town council; advertising covers production costs.
- 50 years' experience in publishing local guides and newspapers.
- Two bi-annual A5 town guides with essential contacts, attractions, maps, and history.
- Online digital copies and social media sharing to enhance accessibility.
- Councils can choose their level of content input. Maybe we could include the precept information, Who does What, or a What's On in here.

## **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 newsletter and survey should be distributed as widely as possible to ensure an inclusive approach. The WhatsApp channel and Town Guide may also help extend reach across different audience groups. Providing the Communications Preference Survey in both paper and online formats will help reduce digital exclusion, particularly for older residents and those without regular internet access. Targeted engagement will also be undertaken with less frequently heard groups, particularly residents aged 18–30, including at the Carnival and through other appropriate opportunities as they arise.
- b) Biodiversity – no direct impact.
- c) Crime & Disorder – Improved communication and community engagement may contribute to greater awareness of community activities and indirectly support community cohesion, helping to reduce anti-social behaviour
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – While print production has some environmental impact, efforts will be made to minimise waste, use sustainable materials where possible, and promote digital communication channels in line with the Council's Climate Emergency declaration.

## **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 risk that, if the survey is not widely accessed or completed across all age groups, the Council may not capture the views of a significant proportion of the local population.

With regard to the Town Guide, Witney has not had an official guide for several years but other publishers are operating in the community offering a similar output.

## **Social Value**

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

Using multiple communication channels such as a survey, WhatsApp channel, and town guide increases inclusivity and ensures engagement reaches a wider and more representative cross-section of the community. This helps reduce digital exclusion, particularly among residents who are either less digitally connected or prefer non-digital formats, while also improving participation from harder-to-reach groups. As a result, the Council is better able to capture a more accurate and balanced view of local opinion.

## **Financial implications**

- The addition of a survey at the carnival and the WhatsApp channel are able to be funded from existing budgets and resource capabilities.
- The guide as presented indicates there is no cost to the Town Council (but this would need to be explored further).

## **Recommendations**

Members are invited to note the report and consider;

1. The best option for presenting a survey at the Carnival;
2. Whether the Council wishes to continue with a WhatsApp channel as part of its Communications resources;
3. The option of investigating further or signing up for a biannual town guide.

**Young People Responses in our Annual Residents' Satisfaction Survey**

For Officers to inform the Youth Council on the following responses in the Annual Residents' Survey.



“I am a young resident of Witney and am writing on behalf of myself and my friends about something that matters to us and the future of Witney. Right now, there are very few affordable places where young people can safely meet, spend time and feel welcome. Most cafes and shops in town are aimed at adults or are too expensive for us to use. Without safe welcoming hangouts, we often end up with nowhere to go after school or on the weekends. We’re not asking for handouts. We’re asking for Witney to be a town where young people can belong.”

“The parks are good, but I think more benches in them and picnic tables would satisfy lots of people and having lots of swings in playgrounds increases the likelihood of young people over 12 to go to the park”

“I’m a student at Woodgreen, I have lived in Witney since I was born. I’ve found that it is so much nicer going on walks here than I thought, because of the gorgeous places to walk like Witney lake, and the flowers that just liven up everything in a wonderful way. I’m really grateful that everyone in town is so kind and approachable and I like to go to the park all the time with my friends”

“Improvement of sporting areas across Witney, allowing a variety of people to stay active needed.”

“Most of my experience is Good and satisfies me however, there are occasions where furniture and other services are poor and not up to standard, this is either it being dirty or non-existing where should be. This could be improved by adding more of these public services and entertainment opportunities maybe using public fields and parks etc etc i.e oxlease park and field for events such as bouncy castle and bbq or other stuff on those lines, this could improve the community engagement throughout the town.”

“Lots of litter around but still beautiful sites to be in.”

“As a teenager, I wish there were more places to just sit, in a field for example and just relax with some friends”

“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.”



# COMMUNITY NEWS

Town Guide Proposal Pack

02

# WHO WE ARE



**Countrywide Publications**

## COUNTRYWIDE PUBLICATIONS

Community News is a division of Countrywide Publications, a well-established publishing house based on the Suffolk coast, just outside Southwold.

Having started as one free monthly newspaper more than 50 years ago, our portfolio now includes three monthly newspapers, two pub guides, multiple town guides, as well as a number of other bespoke publishing solutions.

Based onsite with our parent company, Micropress Printers, we are able to handle everything in-house from advertising sales, design, print and distribution.

Looking after a project from conception to completion ensures a smooth process from start to finish.

## MICROPRESS PRINTERS LTD

Established in 1979, Micropress Printers is one of the UK's largest independently owned printing companies, specialising in litho printing, digital printing and fulfilment services; all done in-house at a state-of-the-art, nine-acre site near Southwold in Suffolk.

Micropress were winners of the Print Week 'Company of the Year' award 2022, recognising not only its commitment to customer service but also to staff training and investment in the future. They are also proud to be officially certified as a carbon balanced business.

**micropress**  
your partner in print



# WHY CHOOSE US?

## 1 PROVEN TRACK RECORD

Having been established over 50 years, we are proud to have worked with town councils and communities for more than half a century.

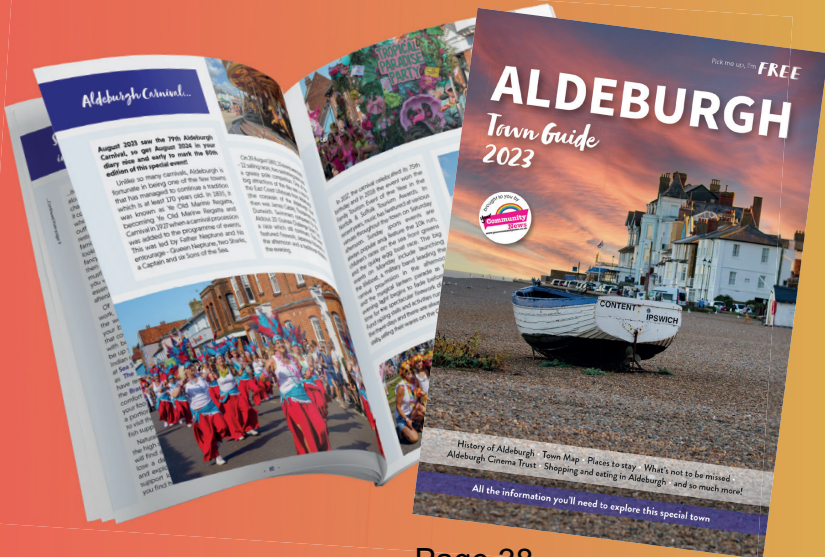
## 2 THE COMPLETE PACKAGE

In partnership with our parent company, Micropress Printers, we are able to provide all services under one roof.

## 3 EXPERIENCED TEAM

Our team may be small, but it is mighty! There are five of us who have more than 80 years' combined experience in publishing.

# A LOOK AT WHAT WE DO



# WHAT CAN WE DO FOR YOU?

A rapidly growing part of our business is the production of town guides.

We work with a number of town councils to produce handy A5 guides covering useful and essential contacts, things to see & do, a town map, history, shopping, walking & exploring, points of interest.

with town councils we are able to offer this service nationwide.

This is a great way of combining essential information and communicate with residents, visitors and businesses in your town.

These guides are bi-annual and delivered to the town council to distribute to residents, visitors and businesses over the two-year shelf life.

We are looking to expand the area we cover and by working



View our full portfolio on our website



View an issue of Aldeburgh Town Guide

## A LOOK AT WHAT WE DO



06

# WHAT WILL IT COST?

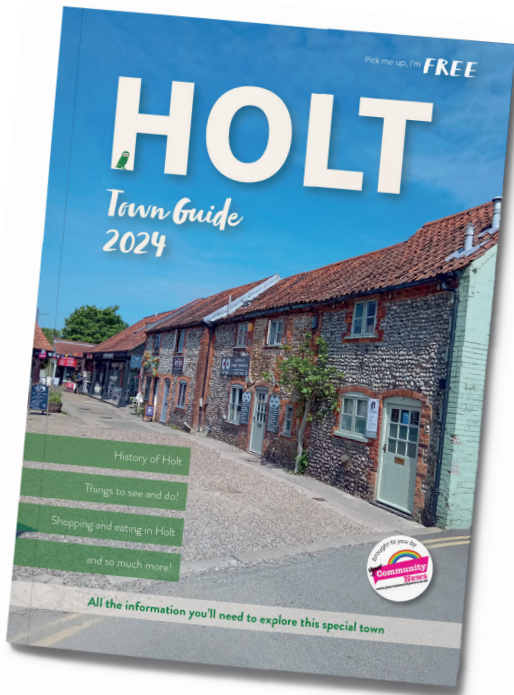
## Nothing!

There is no cost to the town council. We contact local businesses with a view to advertising in the guide.

This advertising covers the cost of production and print and gives the businesses within the guide a great way of reaching the community.

Advertising is also important content within the guide as it gives readers further information and contacts.

\*This is based on our established format of a 36-page A5 publication and a run of 4000 copies.



# HOW INVOLVED WILL YOU BE?

We always like to work with the town council on a guide as you are the experts when it comes to what your town needs.

Many councils have a town manager who looks after marketing and promoting the town.

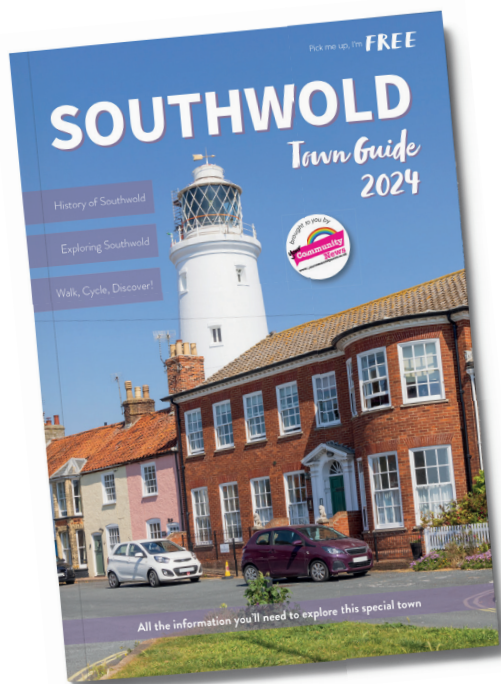
However, we are happy for each council to choose their level of involvement. Some like to send all editorial content while others prefer to send an introduction and leave the rest to us.

**We want the guide to work for you, your town and the people who live and visit there.**



View an issue of Holt Town Guide





## DIGITAL PRESENCE?

Everything we publish has a strong online presence. We can send links and digital copies for town councils to make the guide accessible from their website or social media platforms.

## PRINT STILL RELEVANT?

Yes, very much so. In a world where we are bombarded by digital advertising, being able to pick up something tangible is still very popular.

This is even more apparent when talking about something like a bi-annual town guide as people will keep their copy handy to access the contacts, information and map.

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

As an independent publishing house working with our parent company, we are able to be flexible and adapt any of our titles or projects.

Should you be interested in a larger title, more pages or a greater number of copies we can look at different options.

These would incur a cost.

## WHAT TO DO NEXT?

If you are interested in learning more about how we can work together to produce a town guide for you then please don't hesitate to contact David Burns, Publications Manager at Community News for an informal discussion.

david.burns@micropress.co.uk  
01502 725837 | 07887 414022



Visit our  
Facebook Page



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Instagram Page



View our full portfolio  
on our website



View an issue of  
Southwold Town Guide



Countrywide Publications



## STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE



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**Agenda Item:** Community Engagement Report

**Meeting Date:** Monday, 15<sup>th</sup> June 2026

**Contact Officer:** Communications and Community Engagement Officer

---

The purpose of this report is to update councillors on various community engagement matters.

### **Current Situation**

This is the first report of the new financial year.

### **Heritage Open Day**

The Communications and Community Engagement Officer and Administrator met with a representative of the museum on Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> June and will give a verbal update to the committee. The plans for the Witney Town Council contribution are now as follows:

The theme for 2026 is particularly relevant and presents an excellent opportunity for a local history site such as Tower Hill Cemetery and the local history associated with that.

As a Council contribution, officers would like to revisit one of the elements of its second HOD event, which focused on burial records and the changing occupations of those interred in the cemetery over the decades. This will provide a fascinating insight into the town's social and economic history. The Council could highlight selected graves with information about the occupations of those buried there, helping visitors to see how employment patterns evolved over time. The Council also has a collection of historic business directories that could be displayed to complement this theme.

The chapel would be opened to visitors throughout the event, with refreshments available, as there is always considerable interest in giving people the opportunity to see inside the building. It is proposed that the Council hosts the event over one and a half days: Friday afternoon from 3.00pm to 8.00pm and Saturday morning from 9.00am to 1.00pm. This schedule would provide fair access for both school groups and those who work during the day.

No budget was set for a Heritage Open Day event this year, so officers are requesting use of the £200 underspend from St George's Day to cover refreshments and sundries.

## **Brass on the Grass**

The first of three scheduled concerts took place on Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> June at Woodgreen, and the others are planned for Sunday July 5<sup>th</sup> at Oxlease and Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> August at The Leys.

Feedback from the first concert was positive, *“The Woodgreen concert went very well on Sunday! We probably had about 100 people out on the grass listening to us, the weather was ok and the rain held off, and the 3 Pigeons pub also did a good trade - so hopefully it was a win all round! We had some nice comments on Facebook, and the Witney Gazette has been in contact to use some photos.”*

Both the Town Council and the Band were approached to provide photographs. Unfortunately, the fact that the concerts are funded by WTC was omitted from the very brief article.

## **Witney Carnival**

Alongside the Schools in Bloom wheelbarrow judging and the survey the officers will be bringing crafts and games to the stall. Some Councillors will be joining the walking parade as Iconic musicians.

## **Witney Past Present and Future Recommendations**

The notes from the internal review meeting of the St George’s Day celebrations were circulated at the previous meeting. Several recommendations were made regarding event timings and activities; however, no significant changes to the overall format were proposed, as the event was generally considered to have been successful.

The Chair has been approached by an individual interested in sponsoring part of this event, or potentially another Town Council event. Further details are awaited before any consideration can be given to this proposal.

Councillors have also been asked that the Council considers adding a ‘Big Lunch’ event to the annual events calendar. The Big Lunch is intended to run somewhere between the dates of 5<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> June. The Council’s events calendar is currently at full capacity, and there is limited scope to introduce any additional large-scale events, or scope to plan for them, particularly during the first quarter of the year. During this period, resources are already committed to the production of the Spring Newsletter, the Citizen of the Year awards and Civic Reception, and the Annual Town Meeting, in addition to any other activities taking place at the Corn Exchange.

Should Members wish to expand the St George’s Day programme or introduce changes to its format, any additional costs would need to be identified and considered as part of the budget-setting process later this year.

Options could include rebranding the existing St George’s Day event as a Big Lunch event, although the event takes place at the end of April, significantly earlier than the nationally recognised Big Lunch dates of 5–8 June. Alternatively, consideration could be given to incorporating Big Lunch elements into the RAF Freedom Parade planned for September 2027.

Unless it is incorporated into an existing event with a comparable format, the introduction of a Big Lunch event would, of necessity, require the replacement of an existing event within the annual programme rather than being added as an additional event.

Another solution might be to offer a budget to a community group that does have the capacity and expertise to manage such an event, such as the group that run the weekly community meal at the Methodist Church, and work in partnership with them to create a successful Big Lunch.

The recommendations from the Witney: Past, Present & Future Working Party on 26<sup>th</sup> May 2026 were:

1. That, the feedback, and outcomes from the St George's Day event debrief be noted and,
2. That, St George's Day Events be held in a similar vein in future years and budgeted for accordingly and,
3. That, the proposed arrangements for Armed Forces Day activities on The Leys for 2026 be supported and,
4. That, the planned discussions regarding Heritage Open Day be noted and that further plans be brought to the next meeting and,
5. That, the Council supports continued partnership working with local organisations, community groups, and volunteers to enhance future events and engagement opportunities, including,
  - a. Support for Bishop's Palace Community Heritage Events by the Museum,
  - b. Sponsorship opportunities where appropriate and,
6. That, this Working Party requests that the underspend for this year's St George's Day event budget be allocated on other events during the year under the auspices of this Committee

### **Armed Forces Day**

The event is being organised by the Army and Air Cadets, and progress has been slower than anticipated. As a result, the Council has not yet been able to publicise the event or issue invitations, as key information remains limited.

The Communications and Community Engagement Officer has followed up with the organisers on several occasions and understands that they are experiencing difficulties in securing catering providers. As the Town Council does not regularly host events that accommodate external catering vendors, we do not have a suitable list of contacts to provide. It has been suggested that the organisers use social media to seek expressions of interest from potential vendors, ensuring that any applicants are appropriately vetted and can provide evidence of public liability insurance, food hygiene certification, and any other required documentation.

The Council remains ready to support the event and assist with promotion as soon as further details become available. The Council is keen to see the event succeed; however, the timescales are now becoming increasingly tight.

### **Car Free Day (online promotion)**

Officers will look at new ways to present information and share links with other sites that have ideas of ways to enjoy active travel.

## Love Parks Week

Love Parks Week 2026 will take place from 24 July to 2 August. Organised by Keep Britain Tidy, this annual campaign celebrates the value of green spaces, recognises the contribution of volunteers, and encourages communities to enjoy the outdoors.

Officers propose to support the campaign by promoting relevant activities, events, and news relating to the town's parks and green spaces. As the final day of Love Parks Week coincides with the Town Band's last summer concert, this presents an ideal opportunity to encourage residents to bring a picnic to the park and enjoy the music in a relaxed community setting.

The Town Council will also hold one of its Volunteer Thank You Picnics on the same day, incorporating the concert as part of the event and adding a musical element to the Council's usual volunteer appreciation event.

## Official Bespoke Town Council Bunting

It seems that part of what people like about the Market Square events (D Day, VE Day, St George's Day) is the dressing of the square with bunting which adds to the festive, visual appeal and draws attention to the event taking place.

The Market Place belongs to OCC and has the regular markets overseen by WODC, so it would be unlikely that the Council would get permission to have bunting in place all year round, but it could run a string from each side of the Corn Exchange Balcony to the two closest trees as it did as part of the decorating for St George's Day.

Officers propose that the bunting, like the town flag reflects the heritage of the town but also note that the green crest on white bunting will not stand out much. Therefore, officers have attempted a design of colourful bunting using the Witney Town Council crest or logo and would like councillors to consider whether purchasing some of this as a neutral but colourful bunting for numerous events in the market Square, at the Carnival etc.





## **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 - All proposed projects and events aim to be inclusive and accessible to all residents, supporting equal participation across the community.
- b) Biodiversity - No direct impact on biodiversity is anticipated from these activities. Outdoor events will continue to use existing green spaces responsibly.
- c) Crime & Disorder - Community events and engagement activities promote civic pride and positive social interaction, contributing to a reduction in anti-social behaviour.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – Events and communications will consider environmental impact, minimising waste and promoting sustainable practices in line with the Council's Climate Emergency declaration.

## **Risk**

Councillors should note potential risks relating to event management, staffing capacity, and weather conditions for outdoor activities. Appropriate risk assessments will be undertaken for each project to minimise liability.

Risks are considered low and manageable through established procedures and officer oversight.

## **Social Value**

Council-led events and partnerships create opportunities for community connection, volunteering, and cultural enrichment. Initiatives such as training with local organisations to become ambassadors, champions and key contacts strengthen community identity and wellbeing.

These projects deliver strong social value by supporting local groups, encouraging participation, enhancing civic engagement and providing safe spaces within Town Council buildings.

## **Financial implications**

All activities will be delivered within existing budgets Event costs and officer time will be managed to ensure best value for the community.

## **Recommendations**

Members are invited to note the report and;

1. Agree the format and times for the Heritage Open Day and approve the use of the £200 underspend from St George's Day as a budget to help cover this
2. Consider replacing or rebadging St George's Day next year in order to run a Big Lunch or consider funding and partnering with a suitable community group to run one.
3. Agree to run a Volunteer Picnic at The Leys on 2<sup>nd</sup> August.
4. Agree to the format of the town council's promotion Car Free Day.
5. Consider the purchase of bespoke bunting with WTC or town branding.

## Witney Forum

Date: 24/03/2026

Venue: WODC, Woodgreen Office

### Organisations/Attendees

1. Neil Parker; Citizens Advice (CAOX)
2. Barry Beadle; Volunteer Link Up (VLU)
3. Jennifer Dixon-Clegg; Age UK Oxfordshire (AUKO)
4. Maria Grindley; WWOFB
5. Harry Thompson; DWP
6. Lorna Jones; Cottsway
7. Sue; Besom Charity
8. Victoria Ellis; Cogges
9. Maria; Cogges Church (St. Mary's)
10. Charlotte Bickell; West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC)
11. Kerry Harris; West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC)
12. Stacy Ouma; West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC)

### Apologies

1. Alistair Hobbs; Christians Against Poverty (CAP)

### Coming Up

1. Health and Wellbeing Alliance 23<sup>rd</sup> of April
2. Carterton Volunteer Fair 26<sup>th</sup> of July
3. CAP; Life Skills course
4. 26<sup>th</sup> of March; National Social Prescribing Day (EWPCN)

### Forum Meeting Minutes

#### 1. Volunteer Opportunities & Recruitment

- **Citizens Advice** highlighted a need for additional volunteers, particularly for reception roles and administrative support. They are also exploring opportunities to expand outreach initiatives within the community.
- **Age UK** echoed similar needs, specifically seeking volunteers to support older individuals experiencing loneliness and isolation.
- **Cogges Farm** expressed interest in increasing volunteer involvement in their community-based activities.
- **Harry** noted that he is connected to several individuals who may benefit from volunteering opportunities and will liaise with organisations currently recruiting volunteers.

- **Maria** reported an oversupply of volunteers within her organisation and offered to refer suitable individuals to other groups in need. A broader discussion followed regarding volunteer training processes and the importance of benefits packages in volunteer retention, including initiatives such as *Tickets for Good* and *Cotswold Collective* memberships.
- **Victoria** introduced the **GoVo volunteering platform**, encouraging organisations to register opportunities there to streamline volunteer recruitment and engagement.
- **Neil** requested the organisation of another Volunteer Fair in Witney to further support recruitment efforts across the sector.

## 2. Community Support & Programmes

- **Cottsway Housing** shared several initiatives:
  - Distribution of free magazines aimed at encouraging reading among children.
  - Funding secured through Travis Perkins to support parents of young people who self-harm; currently, only 1 of 8 available spaces has been filled, and referrals are encouraged (note: this is available exclusively to Cottsway customers).
  - Promotion of the Oxfordshire Discovery College Parent Toolkit.
  - The Young Leaders Youth Camp Programme (residential), which currently has two remaining spaces for Cottsway customers.
- **Sue** highlighted available financial, furniture, and potential flooring support for individuals in need. She referenced a current case involving a client supported through the Local Area Coordinator in Chipping Norton (Katrina Fegan), who is experiencing significant challenges.

## 3. Community Safety

- **Charlotte (Community Safety Projects Officer)** raised concerns regarding anti-social behaviour (ASB), particularly in a local underpass/avenue area. Further clarification and potential action points were discussed.

## 4. Community Initiatives & Events

- **Maria (Cogges Church)** outlined plans to deliver crafting and sewing sessions in Witney. Key points include:
  - The need for a central, accessible venue.
  - Sessions aimed at low-income families and individuals facing language barriers.

- A focus on parents and teenagers to encourage both skill development and social interaction.
- **Barry** provided updates on several initiatives:
  - Volunteer Link Up (VLU), Good Neighbour Scheme, and befriending services.
  - Notification that the Witney hotel currently used for asylum accommodation is due to close in June, raising concerns about the continuity of services delivered from that location.
  - A new countywide partnership project with OCVA and Community First Oxfordshire titled *Small and Mighty*, funded by the National Lottery Fund for four years and scheduled to begin in May.

## **5. Resources & Challenges**

- **Maria** raised concerns about accommodation challenges for service users, noting that despite exploring housing options in Witney, suitable spaces remain limited.
- A decrease in food donations was also reported, dropping from 90% to 60% of required levels. Additional contributions are needed to meet demand and bridge the 40% shortfall.

## **Actions & Next Steps**

- Organisations to:
  - Promote and refer individuals to Cottsway-funded programmes to fill remaining spaces.
  - Share volunteer opportunities via the GoVo platform.
  - Collaborate on increasing awareness of available community services and initiatives.
- Further exploration required regarding:
  - Venue options for Cogges Church sessions.
  - Continuity plans for outreach services affected by the hotel closure.
  - Addressing anti-social behaviour concerns raised.



joanne@specialeffect.org.uk

April 2026

Widney Town Council ;  
The Stronger Communities Team



Thank you so much for enabling

SpecialEffect to share the work of  
our charity through time and space in  
the Community Mindset, it is invaluable  
in helping us spread the word locally.

We have received some really positive  
feedback. Thank you very much for your  
support.

With love from Jo ; All the Team @ SpecialEffect ;

## STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE



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**Agenda Item:** Youth Council Update

**Meeting Date:** Monday, 15 June 2026

**Contact Officer:** Admin Assistant – Communications & Engagement

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The purpose of this report is to update the Committee on the Witney Youth Council.

### Background

The Witney Youth Council was established in September 2024 with a group of 12 members. Since its formation, the council has actively participated in town events, including the Christmas Lights Switch-on and the Witney Carnival.

The primary purpose of the Witney Youth Council is to provide children and young people with a collective voice that is heard by decision makers. By giving young people a voice, the Witney Youth Council plays an important role in shaping a more inclusive and responsive local government, encouraging active participation, and developing key skills among Witney's young people.

### Current Situation

#### Youth Council Meeting Attendance and Recruitment

The Youth Council continues to benefit from a core group of four Youth Councillors who regularly attend meetings and contribute to discussions and projects. To ensure all places remain active and engaged, those who have not attended or responded for three consecutive meetings are being contacted to confirm whether they wish to continue their involvement.

Recruitment will be a key focus over the coming months, with efforts underway to welcome new young people to the Youth Council. Current Youth Councillors have agreed to help promote the opportunity within their schools and encourage their peers to apply, alongside support from the Town Council through social media promotion.

Interest in joining remains positive, with an interview for a prospective new Youth Councillor scheduled to take place in June.

#### A Taste of Witney – Witney Youth Council Event

Witney Youth Councillors at the start of this year decided to host an event for young people in response to a lack of activities in Witney, with the aim of celebrating different cultures through food.

With only two restaurants expressing interest and many youth councillors busy with upcoming exams, the event could not go forward. Youth Councillors are instead focusing on joining the town council at the Witney Carnival with a smaller activity to engage with other young people.

The Youth Council, along with officers also attended The Station's BREAK event at The Leys during May half-term to promote the group and seek further engagement.

### **Witney Youth Council's "Politics and Pizza"**

Members of the Youth Council have expressed a strong interest in creating more opportunities to discuss politics and current issues with other young people in the community. Following the success of Oxfordshire County Council's recent Pizza and Politics event at the Corn Exchange, there is clear evidence that young residents are looking to have a dedicated space to share their views, ask questions, and engage in political discussion.

The Youth Council currently has access to a £500 budget, along with subsidised use of the Corn Exchange Hall, which could support the planning and delivery of a similar event. Development of the project could be explored over the coming Youth Council meetings, allowing members to shape the structure and content of the event.

### **National Youth Council UK**

Following the Witney Youth Council voting in favour of joining the National Youth Council, a membership has now been purchased, and upcoming opportunities will begin to be communicated in Youth Council meetings.

### **Witney and District Museum Youth Council Tour**

A representative from the Witney and District Museum, who leads a range of walking tours around Witney, kindly offered to host a tour for the Youth Council. Unfortunately, the date initially proposed was unsuitable for most attendees.

With a busy summer schedule ahead, the representative has agreed to postpone the tour and revisit plans at a later date. She will look to offer alternative dates in the future that may be more convenient for a greater number of young people from the Youth Council to take part.

### **Daily Slides and End of Term Newsletters**

Updates from Witney Youth Council and Witney Town Council concerning young residents are continuing to be shared with local secondary schools for inclusion in their newsletters and daily slides.

### **Dates of Future Meetings**

The dates of the upcoming Youth Council meetings are as follows:

- Tuesday 23 June 2026 – 4PM to 5PM (Informal Meeting)

- Thursday 9 July 2026 – 4PM to 5PM

## **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 – Witney Youth Council inherently tackles inequality by giving a voice and a platform to young people, often apart of diverse communities. Many issues youth councillors want to tackle involve discrimination.
- b) Biodiversity – The Youth Council has begun to show interest in climate initiatives, although specific plans to help Witney's green spaces have not yet been discussed.
- c) Crime & Disorder – Helping young people feel listened to through avenues such as a Youth Council can help reduce anti-social behaviour and crime by Young People through promoting mental health awareness, peer-led activities/initiatives, and improving the reputation of young people in Witney.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency –When Witney Youth Council buy items for their projects, officers have prioritised sustainability and the use of eco-friendly materials.

## **Risk**

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

## **Social Value**

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

- Organisations and local groups able to gather valuable insights on the perspectives and needs of young people in Witney through a small, representative sample.
- Young residents of Witney feel heard and that their voice can make an impact.

## **Financial implications**

- Officers' working time
- Additional internal hall hire and costs relating to Corn Exchange bookings for the Youth Council meetings.

## **Recommendations**

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

1. Consider the Youth Council update.



**WITNEY**  
TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Witney Youth Council held at 4.00 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2026.

**Youth Councillors Present:**

Three Youth Councillors

**Witney Town Council Mentors Present:**

Cllr J Aitman  
Cllr G Meadows

**Witney Town Council Officers Present:**

A Hathaway – Admin Assistant for Communications and Engagement  
A Clapton – Deputy Town Clerk

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The Councillors in attendance were Youth Council mentors and were there to guide and answer questions. Officers advised Members this was their opportunity to provide a voice for young people in Witney and the Town Council would try and bring about their ideas and suggestions.

1. **Apologies**

Apologies from one youth councillor were received.

2. **Declarations of Interest**

Youth Councillors were advised that if they knew anyone or had any involvement in any of the items being discussed at the meeting, they should say it at this point.

There were no declarations of interest.

3. **Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2026 were adopted and signed as correct.

4. **Guest Participation**

Participants at the meeting spoke with the Youth Council.

- Jason Huffadine, Project Director of The Station

Jason spoke with the youth council about The Station's upcoming events, such as their van graffiti activity in May, their KICK sessions coming up over the summer, and the development of their Hot Chocolate van. Invitations to help decorate the van during their next BREAK on 27-29 May from 2-4PM were offered to youth councillors. He also kindly offered advice on how to engage with other young people, such as offering free drinks in exchange for answering questions and handing out leaflets at the Witney Carnival.

**5. Witney Youth Council’s own Pizza and Politics**

Youth Councillors discussed that a good place to trial this would be at the upcoming Witney Carnival – Saturday 11th July 2026. A whiteboard could be shown with various young person responses to the Annual Resident’s Satisfaction Survey for the youth council to ask other young people about, alongside games or activities to win free drinks or sweets.

**6. Young People Responses in our Annual Residents’ Satisfaction Survey**

Officers informed the Youth Council on the following responses in the Annual Residents' Survey.

“I am a young resident of Witney and am writing on behalf of myself and my friends about something that matters to us and the future of Witney. Right now, there are very few affordable places where young people can safely meet, spend time and feel welcome. Most cafes and shops in town are aimed at adults or are too expensive for us to use. Without safe welcoming hangouts, we often end up with nowhere to go after school or on the weekends. We’re not asking for handouts. We’re asking for Witney to be a town where young people can belong.”

“The parks are good, but I think more benches in them and picnic tables would satisfy lots of people and having lots of swings in playgrounds increases the likelihood of young people over 12 to go to the park”

“I’m a student at Woodgreen, I have lived in Witney since I was born. I’ve found that it is so much nicer going on walks here than I thought, because of the gorgeous places to walk like Witney lake, and the flowers that just liven up everything in a wonderful way. I’m really grateful that everyone in town is so kind and approachable and I like to go to the park all the time with my friends”

“Improvement of sporting areas across Witney, allowing a variety of people to stay active needed.”

“Most of my experience is Good and satisfies me however, there are occasions where furniture and other services are poor and not up to standard, this is either it being dirty or non-existing where should be. This could be improved by adding more of these public services and entertainment opportunities maybe using public fields and parks etc etc i.e oxlease park and field for events such as bouncy castle and bbq or other stuff on those lines, this could improve the community engagement throughout the town.”

“Lots of litter around but still beautiful sites to be in.”

“As a teenager, I wish there were more places to just sit, in a field for example and just relax with some friends”

“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.”

**7. National Youth Council**

Youth Councillors were informed that their membership for the National Youth Council was underway.

**8. Witney History Walk for Youth Council**

Youth Councillors were unable to make the date of the 27<sup>th</sup> June. The Youth Council Admin would enquire about other dates or otherwise confirm cancellation.

**9. Upcoming WTC Events for 2026**

Youth Councillors were informed of upcoming Witney Town Council events for involvement.

2026	
May	6th - Annual Council Meeting

	19th - Bus Users' Meeting 22nd - West Witney Sports & Social Club Opening Day 22nd Splash Park Opening
June	5th - Summer Newsletter Inclusion Deadline 7th - Witney Town Band Live at Woodgreen 13th - Start of Drowning Prevention Week 20th - World Refugee Day Flag Raising 23rd - Youth Council Meeting 27th - Armed Forces Day
July	5th - Witney Town Band Live at Oxlease Park 11th - Witney Carnival 27th - Start of Love Parks Week
August	2nd August - Witney Town Band Live at the Leys
September	Date TBC - Witney Feast 18th - Autumn Newsletter Inclusion Deadline 22nd Car Free Day
October	10th - World Mental Health Day
November	9th - Remembrance Day 27th - Christmas Light Switch-On 29th - Advent Fayre
December	TBC - Mayor's Carol Service 2nd - Winter Newsletter Inclusion Deadline

#### 10. **St Mary's Church Youth Café Update**

Youth Councillors were informed that the new Youth Café trialled over April at St Mary's Church would continue until 30th May. From then onwards, the café would pause over summer as they looked for other funding.

#### 11. **Witney Youth Council New Member Recruitment**

Witney Youth Council were encouraged to spread the word that they were accepting new members. Social media posts would be sent out along with notices to schools. Other successful ways of promoting such as at the Witney Carnival and staff connections taking posters into schools.

**Resolved:** That, the Youth Council Admin print posters for Youth Council members to pick up and put around schools.

#### 12. **Items for Future Agenda**

A youth councillor suggested further discussion of the details of what activity the youth councillors could do at the Witney Carnival.

#### 13. **Dates of Future Meetings**

The dates of the upcoming Youth Council meetings were received.

- Tuesday 23 June 2026 – 4PM to 5PM (Informal Meeting)
- Thursday 9 July 2026 – 4PM to 5PM

The Meeting closed at 4.55pm.

## STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE



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**Agenda Item:** Litter picking cabinets  
**Meeting Date:** 15 June 2026  
**Contact Officer:** Administrative Asst - Facilities

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The purpose of this report is to present options for the provision of community litter picking equipment within Witney, and to seek Members' views on the preferred approach.

### Background

The provision of community litter picking equipment was previously discussed by the Committee on 17 November 2025 (Minute SC662 relates). Officers were asked to explore options that would support volunteer litter picking initiatives across Witney, while ensuring appropriate control, safety, and maintenance of equipment.

### Current Situation

#### Research findings / issues

Research has identified that open-access litter picking stations may be vulnerable to vandalism, theft, and misuse. In addition, effective management would require a system for logging users, maintaining stock levels, and ensuring compliance with health and safety requirements, including the secure storage of sharps boxes.

#### Options

##### Option 1 – Lockable Vault (Amnesty-style unit)

- Very Secure
- Weatherproof
- Installed by works team
- Lower cost

##### Option 2 – Combined Bin & Equipment Unit

- Dual purpose
- Maintained within bin collection round
- More integrated

#### Proposed Locations

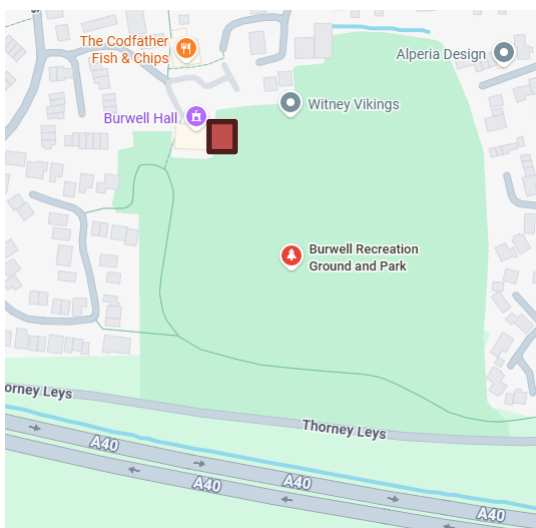
A number of potential locations have been identified to ensure geographic coverage across the town, including The Leys, King George Field, and Burwell Hall.



A possible location at The Leys for a central location



A possible location to King George Field



A location next to Burwell Hall

### **Contents of the Litter Picking Vault**

- Gloves x 20 disposable latex free.
- X 5 Litter picking sticks.
- X 20 Litter collection bags.
- X 5 Litter picking Hoops to aid the collection of litter safely and effectively.
- Litter picking guidelines clearly displayed inside door along with Admin office contact details and a comments sheet for feedback or concerns.
- X1 pack of Hand wipes.
- X1 Sharps box sealed.

Maintained and replenished as required.

### **Option 1:**



With added Vinyl Witney Town Council Logo and Litter Picking Vault Vinyl Stickers. Colours Vary available; Dark Blue, Green, Grey, Light Blue, Magenta, Pure Orange, Recycling Green. Red, Silver, Titanium, Turquoise, White or Black. Colour needs to complement as a base for Witney Town Council Logo also being reader friendly

### **Costs involved:**

- Amnesty Bin cost £412-568 – Various suppliers - Lead time 3-5 weeks
- Cost of additional Vinyl Signage which would be obtained from our existing local printer and supplier of signage and decal. £35
- Fixtures kits - £20
- Dependent on location a concrete base may be required, this would be similar to that used for bench installations

**Option 2:**



Available as coloured. Installation by Works Team. Above Park bin would be provided with Witney Town Logo.

**Costs involved:**

- Park Bin cost £574 – Lead time 4 weeks
- An additional would be applicable to have a plastic side advertising frame added. £25 for A4 and £30 for A3 size.
- Cost of additional large Vinyl Signage which would be obtained from our existing local printer and supplier of signage and decal. Approx. £100
- Fixtures kits - £20
- Dependent on location a concrete base may be required, this would be similar to that used for bench installations

Sponsorship could be considered to mitigate overall costs.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Weatherproof	Appearance resembles a Knife Amnesty Box or litter bin only – although signage added will be clear.
Authorised Access Only	An Extra asset alongside existing Street Furniture.
Secure and Presentable	Cost of replacement/lost equipment

**Corporate Strategy**

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

5. A Beautiful Witney

## **Impact Assessments**

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

- a) Equality - Provides accessible volunteering opportunities for all age groups and backgrounds.
- b) Biodiversity - Reduction in litter supports local ecosystems and wildlife.
- c) Crime & Disorder – Increased community presence however Risk of misuse/vandalism
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency - Litter reduction aligns with the climate and environmental goals.

## **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. Such as theft, vandalism, misuse of equipment, Health & Safety (e.g. discarded needles, excrement) However these are mitigated by lockable units, controlled access, regular monitoring and maintenance.

## **Social Value**

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates. The introduction of units could improve community cohesion, volunteer engagement, intergenerational involvement, individual mental health and wellbeing and bring about civic pride.

## **Financial implications**

- The cost of units. £400-600 per unit with £35-100 required to apply the councils branding or other encouragement advertising options.
- These units could be a consideration for the proposed two litter bin installations at The Leys (P&R Committee 01.06.2026 relates)

## **Recommendations**

Member are invited to note the report and

1. Consider the two proposed options for litter picking equipment provision;
2. Determine whether to proceed with Option 1 (lockable vault) or Option 2 (combined unit) and desired specification.
3. Identify preferred locations for implementation.
4. Should sponsorship be considered.