

Public Document Pack

Policy, Governance & Finance

Committee Meeting of Witney Town Council



Monday, 28th September, 2026 at 6.00 pm

To members of the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee - T Ashby, S Simpson, G Doughty, J Aitman, J Doughty, R Crouch and R Smith (and all other Town Councillors for information).

You are hereby summonsed to the above meeting to be held in the **Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney** for the transaction of the business stated in the agenda below.

Admission to Meetings

All Council meetings are open to the public and press unless otherwise stated.

Any member of the public wishing to attend the meeting should contact the Committee Clerk derek.mackenzie@witney-tc.gov.uk in advance. Priority will be given to those who have registered to speak on an item on the agenda.

Commitment to Civility and Respect

This meeting will be conducted in accordance with Witney Town Council's commitment to the Civility and Respect Pledge. Councillors, officers and members of the public are expected to treat one another with courtesy, dignity, and respect, ensuring that debate remains professional, objective and focused on the business being discussed. Personal criticism, intimidation, or behaviour that could undermine the wellbeing of those present is inconsistent with the standards expected of the Council.

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 [Policy Governance & Finance Committee Meeting](#)

Agenda

1. Apologies for Absence

To consider apologies and reasons for absence.

Committee members who are unable to attend the meeting should notify the Committee Clerk derek.mackenzie@witney-tc.gov.uk **prior to the meeting**, stating the reason for absence.

Standing Order 8(e)(v) permits the appointment of substitute Councillors to a Committee whose role is to replace ordinary Councillors at a meeting of a Committee if ordinary Councillors of the Committee have confirmed to the Proper Officer **before** the meeting that they are unable to attend.

2. Declarations of Interest

Members are reminded to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests in any of the items under consideration at this meeting in accordance with the Town Council's code of conduct.

3. **Minutes** (Pages 5 - 13)

- a) To adopt and sign as a correct record the minutes of the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee meeting held on 22 June 2026.
- b) Matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda (Questions on the progress of any item).

4. **Public Participation**

The meeting will adjourn for this item.

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

Policy

5. **Litter Bin Policy** (Pages 14 - 15)

To receive the recommendation of the Stronger Communities Committee to adopt the revised policy.

6. **Cemetery Regulations** (Pages 16 - 34)

To receive the recommendation of the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee to adopt the updated regulations from 1 November 2026.

7. **Community Asset Acquisition & Management Policy** (Pages 35 - 47)

To receive the report of the Town Clerk/C.E.O.

Governance

8. **Payment of Accounts**

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

9. **Grant Monitoring - Youth Services Awards 2025** (Pages 48 - 68)

To receive and consider the report of the Responsible Financial Officer (R.F.O).

10. **Community Governance Review** (Pages 69 - 71)

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

11. **NALC Local Council Award Scheme - Gold Award** (Pages 72 - 75)

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

Finance

12. **Finance Report**

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

13. **Budget Parameters 2027-28**

To receive and consider the report of the Responsible Financial Officer (R.F.O).

14. **Financial Matters referred from Spending Committees** (Pages 76 - 78)
To receive and consider the report of the Deputy Town Clerk.
15. **Grants & Subsidised Lettings** (Pages 79 - 91)
To receive and consider the report of the Deputy Town Clerk
16. **IT Provision** (Pages 92 - 96)
To receive and consider the report of the Deputy Town Clerk.
17. **Exclusion of Press and Public**
To consider and if appropriate, to pass the following resolution:
That in accordance with section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, and as extended by Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public, including the press, be excluded from the meeting because of the confidential nature of the following business to be transacted
18. **West Witney Projects Update**
To receive and consider the confidential update of the Project Officer.
19. **Property, Legal & Insurance Matters** (Pages 97 - 101)
To receive and consider the confidential report of the Town Clerk which includes updates on:
- Springfield Oval Freehold Transfer
 - The Leys former Public Conveniences Heads of Terms
 - West Witney Clubhouse Lease
20. **Staffing Matters**
To receive the confidential minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee meetings held on 29 July, 20 August & 17 September 2026 (sent under separate cover), and agree any recommendations contained therein.



Town Clerk

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

Held on Monday, 22 June 2026

At 6.01 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney

Present:

Councillor R Smith (Chair)

Councillors:	T Ashby	J Aitman
	S Simpson	J Doughty
	G Doughty	O Collins (In place of R Crouch)
Officers:	Adam Clapton	Deputy Town Clerk
	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
	Mark Lewis	Head of Estates & Operations
	Nigel Warner	Responsible Financial Officer
Others:	None.	

F312 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor R Crouch, Councillor O Collins attended as a substitute.

F313 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor T Ashby declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 15 as he was a Trustee of the Buttercross Scout Group who were an applicant for a Youth Services Grant.

There were no other declarations from Members.

F314 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

The Chair called for nominations for the position of Vice-Chair of the Committee.

It was proposed and seconded that Councillor J Aitman be elected. There being no other nominations it was:

Resolved:

That, Councillor Joy Aitman be elected Vice-Chair of the Committee for the 2026/27 municipal year.

The Responsible Financial Officer arrived at 6:03pm.

F315 **MINUTES**

That, the minutes of the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee meetings held on 30 March & 27 May 2026 were received.

F186 – Members heard that the deferred application from the Friends of Witney Community Primary School would be followed up by Officers.

Resolved:

1. That, the minutes of the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee meetings held on 30 March & 27 May 2026 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair and,
2. That, the deferred application for Friends of Witney Community Primary School be followed up.

F316 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

F317 **COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The committee considered whether any changes were needed to the current Terms of Reference.

Members heard from the Deputy Town Clerk that it had not been possible to review term (k) as resolved at the Annual Council Meeting (Minute No: 228 Refers). This review would be carried out and presented for consideration of the Committee at a future meeting.

No amendments were suggested to the other terms of reference to unanimous agreement.

Recommended:

1. That, the existing Terms of Reference be recommended for approval by the Full Council at the meeting of 13 July 2026 subject to term k and,
2. That, amendments to term (k) be presented for consideration at a future meeting of this Committee.

F318 **ANNUAL RESIDENT'S SURVEY 2026**

The Committee received the report of the Deputy Town Clerk (DTC) concerning the outcomes of the Council's 2026 Annual Residents Survey.

As the Committee with overall governance responsibility, Members noted that matters relating to individual service areas had already been considered by the relevant Committees within the current cycle of meetings. This report therefore provided a summary position across all Committees.

It was noted, as observed by each Committee, that there had been a lower number of responses to the survey, alongside the demographic age profile of respondents, particularly those aged 18 and under. Discussion took place regarding the lower response rates, particularly from younger

residents. Members were advised that the same methodology had been used as in previous years.

The Committee was advised that additional engagement work was being undertaken by Officers, including a resident survey activity planned for Witney Carnival, which was currently in development by Officers.

Members agreed that those matters raised by residents that fell under the remit of external bodies should be shared with Oxfordshire County Council (OCC), West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) and Thames Valley Police (TVP).

The potential introduction of a Council podcast was raised by a Member to enhance engagement, including ahead of future surveys. Members also considered the use of short videos, similar to those produced by grant recipients for the Annual Town Meeting which would be explored by the Stronger Communities Committee.

Members also highlighted the importance of reinforcing messages around personal responsibility, including encouraging residents to take litter home. In addition, it was suggested that the Council's Communications Team should do more to highlight the areas in which the Council had significant expenditure to improve transparency and public awareness.

In relation to the Witney Music Festival, it was unanimously agreed that a wash-up meeting should be held between Officers and the organisers with an update being provided to the Committee at its meeting on 28 September.

Resolved:

1. That, the report and verbal updates be noted and;
2. That, matters raised by residents falling under the remit of external agencies be shared with Oxfordshire County Council, West Oxfordshire District Council and Thames Valley Police and;
3. That, communications encouraging residents to take litter home be promoted and;
4. That, the introduction of a Council podcast (or similar digital engagement methods) be explored further by Officers and;
5. That, the Council's Communications Team be requested to highlight significant areas of Council expenditure to improve transparency.

F319 LITTER PICKING POLICY

The Committee received and considered the report of the Biodiversity & Green Spaces Officer regarding the introduction of a Litter Picking Policy.

Members noted that the adoption of the policy would support the Council's application for Green Flag status for the Lake and Country Park, as well as provide clarity on expectations for volunteers, individuals and organisations undertaking litter picking activities.

Concerns were raised regarding the potential discovery of dangerous items. It was therefore agreed that the policy should include additional guidance on how to respond in such circumstances.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and;

2. That, the Litter Picking Policy be approved subject to inclusion of guidance on the handling of dangerous items and reporting procedures

F320 **PAYMENT OF ACCOUNTS**

The Committee received the report of the Responsible Financial Officer with the accompanying payment schedules, bank statements and reconciliations.

Resolved:

That, the report, bank statements and reconciliations be noted, and the following schedule of payments be approved:

Payment reference	In the sum of:	Account
DDs, ELPs (electronic payments) and Standing Orders February 2026	£780,196.81	General CB 1
Cheques, DDs, BACs and Standing Orders February 2026	£14,404.70	Imprest CB 2
DDs, ELPs and Standing Orders March 2026	£702,934.72	General CB 1
Cheques, DDs and Standing Orders March 2026	£9,656.68	Imprest CB 2
DDs, ELPs and Standing Orders April 2026	£647,497.99	General CB 1
Cheques, DDs and Standing Orders April 2026	£10,796.51	Imprest CB 2

F321 **ACCOUNTS & AUDIT (ENGLAND) REGULATIONS 2015 - ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN (AGAR) 2025-26**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) concerning the Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) for 2025/26 under the Accounts & Audit (England) Regulations 2015.

Members were reminded of the statutory requirement to complete and submit the AGAR by 30 June 2026.

The RFO guided Members through each section of the AGAR submission, reinforcing the details outlined in the report, with particular reference to the responses to the ten assertions contained within Section 1, the Annual Governance Statement.

Members were advised of the reasoning for the restatement of the total fixed assets figure within Section 2, Accounting Statements 2025/26 and it was further noted that the External Auditor's report would be completed by 30 September 2026, at which point Section 3 the External Auditor Report and Certificate would be finalised.

Members were in agreement with all recommendations outlined in the report.

Recommended:

1. That, the Annual Internal Audit report be noted and;
2. That, the Annual Governance Statement at Section 1 of the Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2026 be approved and adopted with questions 1 to 8 and 10 answered “Yes” and question 9 marked as “Not Applicable” and,
3. That, the Statement of Accounts at Section 2 of the Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2026 be approved and adopted and,
4. That, the draft Notice of Public Rights and Publication for 2025/26 be noted

F322 INTERNAL AUDIT 2026

The Committee received the final report of the Council’s Internal Auditor for the year 2025/26.

The Responsible Financial Officer provided a verbal update, advising that the audit reports produced throughout the year collectively form the final annual audit position.

Members were pleased to note that no issues of concern had been identified across the audit process and congratulated Officers and staff on the high standard of financial management demonstrated.

Resolved:

1. That, the Internal Audit report for 2025/26 be noted.

F323 FINANCE REPORT

The Committee received and considered the report of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) detailing income and expenditure for budgets across all Committees, providing a final position for the 2025/26 financial year.

Members heard that the principal change during the year had been the movement of Green Spaces budget lines, mainly from the Stronger Communities Committee to the Climate & Biodiversity Committee. In addition, property budgets had been consolidated into a new cost centre to improve transparency of income and expenditure of these key assets.

The RFO advised that the year-end overall surplus position, along with the status of earmarked reserves, would be presented to the meeting of the Council on 13 July. Members acknowledged that the Council’s overall financial position remained healthy.

The Committee also noted a summary of investment activity, with a more detailed report to follow to the 28 September meeting of the Committee.

In respect of the West Witney Sports & Social Club project, Members received an update on variations in project expenditure. It was noted that these were modest in the context of the overall project cost and not unexpected as part of project delivery where unforeseen matters arise. A further update would be provided to the meeting of the Council on 13 July.

The Committee considered and unanimously approved capital expenditure requests for the purchase of a new mower for fine turf areas (£8,000) and a replacement vehicle for use by the Biodiversity & Green Spaces Officer (£25,000). It was noted that both purchases would be funded from existing earmarked reserves established for such purposes.

Members also noted the external bar stocktake and the current situation with the Internal Audit function of the Council.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted, and,
2. That, the management accounts of the Council to 31 March 2026 be approved and,
3. That, the report on investments to the period to 31 May 2026 be approved and,
4. That, the report on investment activity during 2025-26 be approved and,
5. That, the external bar stocktake report for the period to 9 April 2026 be noted and,
6. That, the financial update in relation to the West Witney Project be noted and,
7. That, the capital expenditure for a replacement mower and vehicle be approved with funding to be met from the respective Outside Services Contingency and Renewals fund earmarked reserves and,
8. That, the appointment of Auditing Solutions as Internal Auditor for the financial year 2026-27 be approved and,
9. That, the re-tendering for the Internal Audit function be delegated to officers or the five-year period from 1 April 2027.

Cllrs A Bailey & A Mubin joined the meeting at 6:56pm.

F324 FINANCIAL MATTERS REFERRED FROM SPENDING COMMITTEES

The Committee received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Council outlining financial matters arising from the recent cycle of Committee meetings.

Attention was drawn to the some of the requests such as that of the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee regarding the introduction of wedding packages for the Public Halls, additional funds for the hearing loop project across the Councils premises as well as details of amendments to the Public Halls terms and conditions, which whilst not a financial recommendation was included for completeness.

Additionally, the Climate & Biodiversity Committees request regarding wildflower planting at Curbridge Road and the subsidised use of the Corn Exchange for the 2026 Eco fair.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the financial recommendations arising from the spending Committees be approved including the additional costs presented in the report for Curbridge Road roundabout and,
3. That, the revised Public Halls terms and conditions and wedding packages be agreed.

Cllr G Meadows joined the meeting at 6:59pm

F325 SKATE PARK FENCING

The Committee received the additional detail following a request from the Parks & Recreation Committee that the costs of additional fencing between the skatepark and the Courtside site be considered. (Minute PR273 - Parks & Receptions Committee 1 June 2026 Refers)

Members were presented with a written report alongside a verbal explanation from the Head of Estates & Operations outlining the available options.

Following consideration, the Committee unanimously agreed that Option C be selected, providing for the installation of height extended 358 anti-climb mesh fencing to both the rear and courtside areas.

Members noted that costs would be monitored in accordance with the Council's Financial Regulations and that the expenditure would be met from the Outside Services budget to provide the most cost-effective solution to the problems encountered at the facility by the town council and its tenant.

Resolved:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, Option C for the installation of 358 anti-climb mesh fencing be approved and,
3. That, the cost be funded from the Outside Services budget and monitored in line with Financial Regulations.

F326 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC**

Resolved

That in accordance with section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, and as extended by Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public, including the press, be excluded from the meeting because of the confidential nature of the following business to be transacted.

F327 **GRANTS & SUBSIDISED LETTINGS - YOUTH SERVICES GRANTS**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk regarding Youth Services Grant applications which outlined the recommendations of the evaluation panel, which had been delegated this responsibility by the Stronger Communities Committee

Members noted the comments of the Chair of the Stronger Communities Committee, who expressed surprise at the number and overall quality of the applications received. However, it was considered that some applicants should be invited to submit applications to the Council's Discretionary Grants budget

The Committee further considered applications from ARCh, Clear Sky Children's Charity, Bright Futures (The Station) and YES Futures and agreed that these requests should be refused.

The Committee gave further detailed consideration to the application from Witney Buttercross Scouts. Members noted that grant funding was typically awarded to support sustainable or new opportunities; however, additional information had been sought from the applicant. Members were advised that the proposal was to install modular toilet facilities at the newly acquired Scout site. It was noted that this would enable the site to be brought into use earlier than planned and provide a facility that would benefit a significant number of young people from Witney. Following consideration, it was proposed and agreed that a contribution of £5,000 be made towards the total project costs.

Members considered the remaining applications recommended for support from the Youth Services Grant budget (4169/408). Members were unanimous in agreement, with the exception of Cllr T Ashby who abstained on the vote for the award to Witney Buttercross Scouts owing to his earlier declaration.

Resolved:

1. That, Ducklington Sports Club, West Oxon Levellers, Witney Mills Cricket Club and Witney Wolves Basketball Club be invited to apply to the Discretionary Grants budget (407/4100) and,
2. That, the applications from ARCh, Clear Sky Children's Charity, Bright Futures (The Station) and YES Futures be declined and,
3. That, the following Youth Services Grants be awarded under the General Power of Competence and recipients be asked to acknowledge the Council's financial contribution in their promotional literature:
 - Aspire – £2,500
 - Be Free Young Carers – £2,000
 - Benefice of Witney – £2,000
 - Courtside – £2,000
 - Hope After Harm – £1,000
 - 1st North Leigh Guides – £500
 - Buttercross Scouts – £5,000
 - Yellow Submarine – £1,500
4. That, Home Start Oxford be awarded £12,000 for early years preventative services from the budget set aside for this.
5. That the remaining £3,500 of the youth services grant budget be ringfenced for future youth-related applications during the municipal year

Cllr A Mubin left the meeting at 7:18pm.

F328 PROPERTY, LEGAL & INSURANCE MATTERS

The Committee considered a confidential report relating to one of the Council's properties.

The Chair highlighted the need for confidentiality due to the ongoing commercial sensitivity of the matter. Members discussed the options available and agreed that further work was required before any formal decision could be taken.

It was therefore agreed that Officers be authorised to continue engagement and commission a full report setting out strategic options for consideration by the Council.

Members noted that this work was expected to take approximately 4–6 weeks to complete.

Resolved:

1. That, the confidential report be noted and,
2. That, Officers be authorised to undertake further work and engagement to develop strategic options for consideration by the Council.

F329 STAFFING MATTERS

The Committee received the minutes of the Personnel Sub Committee meetings held on 8th and 20th April 2026 which had been circulated prior to this meeting.

Resolved:

That, the confidential minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee meetings held on 8th & 20th April 2026, and the recommendations contained therein be approved.

The meeting closed at: 7.26 pm

Chair

WITNEY

TOWN COUNCIL



Policy Document

Litter & Dog Waste Bins

Adopted: Policy, Governance & Finance Committee. Minute no: xxx

Review Date: September 2028

Introduction

Witney Town Council is responsible for the provision, maintenance and emptying of litter and dog waste bins located on land owned or managed by the Council. These bins provide a valuable public amenity, helping to keep the Council's parks, recreation grounds, cemeteries and open spaces clean, safe and welcoming. Appropriate bin provision also supports responsible waste disposal, protects the local environment and contributes to the Council's commitments to sustainability, biodiversity, and the health and wellbeing of residents and visitors.

Council responsibilities

West Oxfordshire District Council is the principal authority responsible for street cleansing and public waste collection in Witney.

Witney Town Council is only responsible for the emptying and maintenance of litter and dog waste bins located on land owned or managed by the Town Council.

The Town Council will:

- Consider requests for new, additional, replacement or relocated bins only on land owned or managed by Witney Town Council.
- Assess each request individually, with no fixed distance or numerical threshold applied.
- Consider the likely use of the bin, evidence of littering or dog fouling, existing bins nearby, accessibility, operational requirements and ongoing costs.
- Decide whether a litter bin, dog waste bin or combined litter and dog waste bin is most appropriate for the location.
- Review existing provision and relocate, replace or remove bins where this would improve the service or make better use of Council resources.
- Ensure that any new provision can be safely and practically emptied and maintained.

The absence or removal of a bin by another authority will not automatically result in the Town Council providing a replacement.

Requests outside Town Council land

Requests concerning bins on land not owned or managed by Witney Town Council fall outside the Council's responsibility and should be directed to the appropriate authority, organisation or landowner (where known)

Decision-making

Requests for bins on Town Council land will be assessed by officers in accordance with this policy and the Council's approved delegation and financial arrangements.

Requests for bins on land not owned or managed by the Town Council will only be considered in exceptional circumstances. Such requests will be assessed individually as part of an annual review, taking account of community need, landowner consent, available resources and the ongoing costs of provision, emptying and maintenance.

Review

This policy will be reviewed biennially by the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee.

Contents

Contents	1
1. Glossary of Terms.....	3
2. Law and Jurisdiction	3
3. Variations	3
4. General Cemetery Information.....	3
4.1 Windrush Cemetery Access	3
4.2 Tower Hill Cemetery Access	4
4.3 Closures for ceremonies.....	4
5. Cemetery Rules.....	4
5.1 General Rules	4
5.2 Offences Within the Cemetery.....	4
6. Burial Plots and Interment Options	4
6.1 Lawn Burials	4
6.2 Burials in Accordance with Islamic Practices	5
6.3 Meadow Burials	5
6.4 Woodland Burials.....	5
6.5 Children's and Baby Plots.....	6
6.6 Ashes Path – Windrush Cemetery.....	6
6.7 Family Ashes Plots – Tower Hill Cemetery.....	6
6.8 Scattering of Ashes – Windrush & Tower Hill Cemeteries.....	6
6.9 Memorial Plaques and Stones.....	7
7. Schedule of Interment	7
8. Graveside Preparation and Backfilling	8
9. Cancellations and Additional Charges	8
9.1 Cancellations	8
9.2 Late Arrivals and Departures	8
9.3 Existing Memorials.....	8
9.4 Changes to Interment Dates.....	8
9.5 Oversized Burials.....	8
9.6 Weekend Burials.....	9
10. Burial Times.....	9
11. Burial Notice.....	9
12. Exclusive Rights of Burial.....	9
12.1 Limitations.....	10
12.2 Term of Exclusive Rights of Burial	10
12.3 Transfer of the Exclusive Right of Burial Back to the Burial Authority.....	10
13. Transfer of the Exclusive Right of Burial	10
13.1 Living Grantee.....	11
13.2 Deceased Grantee.....	11

14. Renewal of Exclusive Rights of Burial.....	12
15. Re-use of Grave Space.....	12
16. Commonwealth War Graves	12
17. Public Graves	12
18. Record Keeping.....	12
19. Residency.....	13
20. Reserving a Grave Space	13
21. Children's Funeral Fund	14
22. Cemeteries Maintenance	14
22.1 Grave Mounds	14
22.2 Levelling.....	14
22.3 Grounds Maintenance	14
23. Memorial Testing	14
24. Damage to Memorials	15
25. Removing Headstones to Gain Access to Reserved Plots.....	15
26. Removing Headstones for a Second Interment.....	15
27. Item Clearance	15
28. Tree Works	16
29. Stone Masons.....	16
30. Memorials	16
30.3 Headstones.....	17
30.4 Monoliths.....	17
30.5 Wooden Crosses	17
30.6 Babies' and Children's Memorials	17
30.7 Memorial Tablets.....	18
31. Placement of Items on Graves and Gardens.....	18
32. Garden Area	18
33. Vaults	18
34. Review and Adoption Information	19

1. Glossary of Terms

Term	Definition
WTC, Town Council or Council	Witney Town Council, acting as the local burial authority responsible for managing and providing burial grounds.
EROB	An Exclusive Right of Burial.
Spent	An Exclusive Right of Burial is considered spent when no usable grave space remains for a further permitted interment.
Interment	The burial of a human body or cremated human remains.
Green Form or Registrar's Certificate	The certificate authorising the burial of a body or the interment of cremated remains, where applicable.
Statutory Declaration	A formal written statement of fact that is declared to be true and signed in the presence of a person authorised to administer the declaration.
Grant	The document issued by the Burial Authority evidencing the Exclusive Right of Burial for a specified grave space.
Grantee	The person named on the Grant as the holder of the Exclusive Right of Burial.
Funeral organiser	The funeral director, undertaker or other person responsible for making arrangements for an interment.

2. Law and Jurisdiction

These regulations shall be governed by the laws of England and shall be subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of the English courts.

3. Variations

These Cemetery Regulations supersede and replace all previous cemetery regulations, terms and conditions issued by Witney Town Council.

Witney Town Council may, **at its sole discretion and at any time**, amend, replace, withdraw or add to these Cemetery Regulations. The Council is **not required to provide prior notice** of any amendment, except where notice is required by law.

Any amendment will take effect immediately on the effective date stated in the revised document, unless the Council specifies a different commencement date.

From that date, the revised Cemetery Regulations will apply to all cemetery activities, applications, permissions and works undertaken within cemeteries managed by Witney Town Council, subject to any statutory requirements or transitional arrangements expressly determined by the Council.

It is the responsibility of applicants, funeral organisers, funeral directors, memorial masons, holders of Exclusive Rights of Burial and other cemetery users to ensure that they refer to the current version of these Cemetery Regulations before making an application, arranging an interment or undertaking any work within a cemetery.

4. General Cemetery Information

4.1 Windrush Cemetery Access

Windrush Cemetery is permanently open to members of the public with parking available near the entrance to the cemetery.

The road around the grave sections is only designed as an access road for works vehicles and funeral cortège.

The cemetery is not open for vehicles during ceremonies.

A sign will be placed on the entrance and car parking controlled by cemetery operatives.

4.2 Tower Hill Cemetery Access

Period	Opening hours	Vehicle access to Sections 6, 7 and 8
Monday to Friday	09:00 to 16:00	The access bollards can be removed on request. Requests must be made via 01993 704379 at least 24 hours before the proposed visit.
Saturday and Sunday	07:00 to 11:00	The access bollards are removed to permit vehicle access around Sections 6, 7 and 8.

The gates are opened and closed by Town Council staff or authorised contractors.

4.3 Closures for ceremonies

During a ceremony, the main vehicle gates and the north pedestrian gate will be temporarily locked for the duration of the ceremony. No advance notice of an individual ceremony closure will be provided.

5. Cemetery Rules

The following rules apply within both cemeteries. Some activities may also constitute an offence under applicable legislation.

5.1 General Rules

Dogs are permitted in the cemetery but must always be on leads and all waste must be cleared up.

No parking is permitted in any area that is not a designated parking space.

Bicycles must not be ridden within the cemetery.

All rubbish must be cleared away.

Music or other sound must not be amplified in a manner that causes disturbance to other cemetery users or neighbouring properties.

5.2 Offences Within the Cemetery

To wilfully create any disturbance in a cemetery.

To commit any nuisance in a cemetery.

To wilfully interfere with any burial taking place in a cemetery.

To wilfully interfere with any grave or vault, tombstone or other memorial, or flowers or plants.

To play any game or sport in a cemetery.

6. Burial Plots and Interment Options

6.1 Lawn Burials

Lawn burials are the standard burial plot offered at both Windrush and Tower Hill Cemetery.

They can accommodate one or two full interments depending on the cemetery.

Lawn graves at Windrush Cemetery are double-depth and may accommodate up to two full interments. Lawn graves at Tower Hill Cemetery are single-depth and may accommodate one full interment. Cremated remains may only be interred after the grave has received its permitted number of full interments.

Subject to arrangement with the Council, cremated remains may be placed beneath the turf of a grave by carefully lifting the turf and placing the ashes directly onto the soil beneath. This constitutes an authorised interment of cremated remains and is not the same as the scattering of ashes over the surface of a grave, which is prohibited.

The charge will be the same as an ashes interment.

To perform a future burial the layer of soil will need to be disturbed, and the cremated remains moved from the resting place.

Tower Hill lawn burials are single depth.

All bodies must be interred within a coffin.

The coffin must have a nameplate.

Due to double-depth burials, cemetery staff must be able to identify the first interment before interring a second body.

6.2 Burials in Accordance with Islamic Practices

Burial plots are provided and oriented to accommodate burials undertaken in accordance with Islamic practices.

All plots designated for burials in accordance with Islamic practices are single-depth graves.

Burials may take place in either a coffin or a burial shroud, subject to these Regulations and any applicable legal and operational requirements.

Where a burial shroud is used, funeral organisers must backfill the grave until the body is no longer visible before council staff complete backfilling.

A suitable container must be used to transport the deceased to the graveside.

Brushwood or softwood boards may be used to line the base of the grave to a maximum depth of 30mm.

Upon expiry of burial rights any headstone may be removed by the Council, but no further interments will take place in any available remaining grave space.

6.3 Meadow Burials

A wildflower meadow is provided at Windrush Cemetery for interments.

The purpose of this area is to establish and maintain a flowering meadow environment.

The meadow may receive up to three cuts per year during spring, summer and autumn.

The principal summer cut may involve collection of vegetation.

Additional winter maintenance cuts may be undertaken to control weeds.

Supplementary seeding may be undertaken during March and April.

Once the ground has recompacted following an interment, a wildflower seed mix will be sown over the grave.

Rules Specific to Meadow Burials

Exclusive Rights of Burial cannot be purchased.

Plots cannot be reserved.

Embalmed bodies are not permitted.

No grave marker may be installed.

Identification

As no grave marker may be placed, the burial will be recorded using the standard Council burial records system.

In addition, a grave marker peg will be buried within the plot.

Plots may subsequently be identified through a grave marker peg containing an electronically readable RFID tag.

The RFID tag number will be recorded in both the burial register and the cemetery management software.

6.4 Woodland Burials

Woodland burials are located within the lower section of Windrush Cemetery.

They are intended to provide an environmentally conscious and lower cost burial option.

The woodland burial area has been designed to provide the lowest carbon footprint burial option available within Witney Town Council cemeteries.

Rules Specific to Woodland Burials

Only single-depth interments are permitted.

Exclusive Rights of Burial cannot be purchased.

Plots cannot be reserved.

Embalmed bodies are not permitted.

No form of grave marker may be installed.

This restriction includes the period immediately following an interment, and all flowers will be removed by Council staff following the interment.

The purpose of the area is to maintain an environmentally conscious approach and flowers are therefore discouraged.

All woodland burials must take place in an environmentally friendly coffin or burial shroud made from biodegradable materials, such as bamboo, banana leaf, willow or cardboard. Other biodegradable materials may be accepted with the prior approval of Witney Town Council.

Where a burial shroud is used, funeral organisers must backfill the grave until the body is no longer visible before Council staff complete the backfilling process.

Oversized coffins are not permitted.

Plots may be identified in future through a grave marker peg containing an RFID tag.

When designated sections of the woodland burial area reach capacity, trees and perennial wildflower bulbs may be planted to create woodland habitat areas.

6.5 Children's and Baby Plots

Separate children's and baby burial plots are provided at Windrush Cemetery.

These plots are intended for use alongside the Children's Funeral Fund and have a longer EROB period to allow the later interment of the ashes of parents, guardians or other family members.

Plot Dimensions

Plot type	Dimensions
Baby plot	0.9 metres long by 0.66 metres wide
Children's plot	1.5 metres long by 0.99 metres wide

Additional Provisions

Exclusive Rights of Burial for children's and baby plots are granted for a period of 90 years.

Following a full interment, up to two sets of cremated remains may be interred within the plot.

Memorials for children's and baby plots are subject to the dimensions specified within the Memorial Sizes document.

6.6 Ashes Path – Windrush Cemetery

Windrush Cemetery contains a paved ashes path for the interment of ashes caskets.

Each ashes plot is designed to accommodate up to two caskets. Any additional caskets would only be granted permission from the Council as the time of the additional interment.

The Exclusive Right of Burial must be purchased.

Only a sloping desk tablet memorial may be installed.

6.7 Family Ashes Plots – Tower Hill Cemetery

Tower Hill Cemetery provides family ashes plots for the interment of cremated remains.

Each plot may accommodate up to eight ashes caskets.

Only a standing memorial may be installed.

6.8 Scattering of Ashes – Windrush & Tower Hill Cemeteries

Ashes may be scattered within designated ashes scattering beds. Permission must be sought and a date and time agreed in advance with the Council offices prior to any scattering.

Any unauthorised scattering of ashes will be stopped if prior permission has not been granted.

The scattering of ashes on grave plots is strictly not permitted, even where the Exclusive Right of Burial has been purchased for the plot. This restriction is necessary to ensure scattered ashes are not distributed onto neighbouring plots by weather conditions or during the scattering process, which may cause distress or offence to other grave owners and visitors.

Any unauthorised scattering or disposal of ashes may be collected and interred by the council into an unmarked area.

6.9 Memorial Plaques and Stones

Memorial plaques may be installed on the memorial wall at Tower Hill Cemetery or on the memorial monolith at Windrush Cemetery.

Memorial pebbles may be installed into the designated area within the children's memorial garden at Windrush Cemetery.

The individual named on a memorial plaque or pebble need not be interred within the cemetery.

A completed application form must be submitted and approval granted prior to a memorial plaque or stone being installed.

The size, material and inlay colour of memorial plaques will be determined by cemetery officers to maintain a consistent and uniform appearance.

7. Schedule of Interment

The Town Council will follow the process below for all interments within its cemeteries. The interment process will be managed in cooperation with the funeral organiser.

Interment Application

A completed interment form must be submitted to the Council as formal notice of the interment. The form must include the grave plot number and the proposed date and time of the interment.

Where the grave plot is not owned by the deceased, the owner of the Exclusive Right of Burial must provide written permission for the plot to be used. This permission must be submitted with the interment form.

Date and Time

The date and time of the interment must be arranged with the Town Council before arrangements are confirmed with any other party.

The Council will make reasonable efforts to accommodate the requested date and time. However, as the burial authority, the final date and time of an interment will be determined by the Town Council.

Interment dates and times will be managed with regard to factors including:

- Other interment bookings
- Staffing
- Equipment availability
- Grave location
- Proximity to open graves
- Excavation time
- Public holidays

Grave Preparation and Documentation

Once a completed interment form has been received, cemetery operatives will begin the process of excavating and preparing the grave space.

All required paperwork must be submitted no later than 24 hours before the scheduled time of the interment.

Following the interment, cemetery operatives will record the burial in the relevant cemetery burial register. The register entry must be signed by the funeral organiser.

8. Graveside Preparation and Backfilling

Graves will be prepared to minimise the visibility of excavated soil. The graveside will be dressed with artificial grass, and excavated soil will be covered where appropriate. This also applies to ashes interments within the ashes path at Windrush Cemetery.

Excavated soil will normally be placed temporarily on the nearest neighbouring grave until the interment and backfilling have been completed. The Council will seek to minimise the duration of its placement and any disturbance to neighbouring graves.

Any request for excavated soil to be placed elsewhere must be made when the first notice of interment is given and is subject to the Council's approval. An additional charge will apply as specified in the current burial charges schedule.

Following the interment, the grave will be backfilled and the surrounding area reinstated. Any ground damage arising from the works will be repaired when weather, ground and seasonal conditions permit.

9. Cancellations and Additional Charges

9.1 Cancellations

Where an interment is cancelled by Witney Town Council because the required paperwork has not been submitted, the full burial charge will be payable by the funeral organiser.

The deadline for submission of all required paperwork is 24 hours before the scheduled time of interment. By that point, the grave plot may already have been prepared and, in some circumstances, may need to be backfilled following cancellation.

The funeral organiser is responsible for ensuring that the funeral procession arrives at the time stated on the interment form.

The Town Council may take exceptional circumstances into account when considering a cancellation charge. Any reduction or waiver will be at the discretion of the Town Council.

9.2 Late Arrivals and Departures

The Funeral Organiser is responsible for the timekeeping of the ceremony.

The standard time allocated for a ceremony is 45 minutes. Additional fees will be charged for late arrivals or departures in increments of 15 minutes, at the rate specified in the current burial charges schedule.

9.3 Existing Memorials

Where a second interment is proposed within a lawn burial plot or ashes plot, the Funeral Organiser will be responsible for any charges associated with the removal of an existing memorial from the grave plot being used for the interment.

The presence of an existing memorial must be identified when the first notice of interment is given.

9.4 Changes to Interment Dates

A fee, as specified in the current burial charges schedule, will be charged where an amendment is made to a final submitted interment date. The date stated on the submitted interment form will be treated as the final submitted date.

Booking an interment date removes that date and time from availability for other applicants. Reasonable changes to the time of an interment will not normally incur a charge.

9.5 Oversized Burials

An additional oversized burial fee will apply where the coffin or casket exceeds any of the maximum dimensions shown below. The applicable oversized burial fee, in addition to the standard burial fee is specified in the current burial charges schedule.

Measurement	Maximum size
Length	213 cm / 84 inches

Measurement	Maximum size
Width	71 cm / 28 inches
Depth	58 cm / 23 inches

9.6 Weekend Burials

In exceptional circumstances, a weekend burial may be arranged at the discretion of Witney Town Council, subject to the availability of three cemetery operatives. Weekend burials cannot be guaranteed and, where accommodated, will be charged at the applicable weekend hourly rate for three cemetery operatives, together with the standard burial fee and any other charges set out in the current burial charges schedule.

10. Burial Times

Burials are available within both cemeteries from Monday to Friday, excluding public holidays. Available burial times vary throughout the year in accordance with daylight hours.

Period	Days	Available booking times
November to March	Monday to Friday	11:00 to 14:00
April to October	Monday to Thursday	11:00 to 15:00
April to October	Friday	11:00 to 14:00

The times stated above are booking times and are not inclusive of the total ceremony duration. A burial booking may be accepted for the latest stated time within the applicable period.

11. Burial Notice

A minimum of three working days' notice, excluding the day of interment, is required to allow sufficient time for the Council to complete the necessary administration and prepare the grave or ashes plot. The Council will make reasonable efforts to accommodate the requested date, but operational circumstances may require a longer notice period.

Where an existing headstone or memorial must be removed to permit excavation, the funeral organiser is responsible for arranging its removal. Excavation and preparation of the grave cannot begin until the headstone or memorial has been removed.

The Certificate for Burial or Cremation, commonly known as the Green Form or Registrar's Certificate, must be provided to the Town Council no later than 24 hours before the interment.

The certificate may be:

- Emailed
- Posted
- Delivered in person

Witney Town Council accepts no responsibility for certificates lost in the postal system and no burial will be allowed to take proceed prior to receipt of the certificate.

It is an offence for a burial certificate to be forged, or otherwise improperly handled. (Births and Deaths Registration Act 1953)

12. Exclusive Rights of Burial

The Exclusive Right of Burial permits the Grantee to authorise burials within a specified grave space. The Exclusive Right of Burial also grants permission to erect a memorial, subject to compliance with the Cemetery Regulations.

The grant will contain details including:

- Burial authority
- Cost of the grant
- Grave space number
- Cemetery
- Section reference
- Date of purchase
- Duration of the grant
- Grantee contact information

The grant will be issued to the Grantee.

A copy will be retained by Witney Town Council and stored digitally.

12.1 Limitations

An Exclusive Right of Burial does not convey ownership of the land.

The right only permits the Grantee to:

- Determine who may be buried within the grave space
- Authorise the installation of a memorial

All other cemetery rules and regulations remain applicable.

12.2 Term of Exclusive Rights of Burial

The Exclusive Right of Burial is granted for a fixed period from the date of purchase. The applicable term will be stated on the Grant.

The current term granted for non-baby or child plots is:

Cemetery	Current term
Windrush Cemetery	30 years
Tower Hill Cemetery	30 years

Witney Town Council may amend the term applicable to future purchases and renewals.

The Council does not grant or renew burial rights to be held in perpetuity or for periods that would exceed one hundred years.

An exception applies to Commonwealth War Graves, where rights may be granted or recognised in perpetuity.

12.3 Transfer of the Exclusive Right of Burial Back to the Burial Authority

The Grantee may transfer an Exclusive Right of Burial back to the Council at any time.

The Council will purchase the right at the original purchase price paid as stated on the grant.

The Council will only repurchase rights where usable grave space remains.

13. Transfer of the Exclusive Right of Burial

All transfers of Exclusive Rights of Burial shall be administered by the burial authority.

Witney Town Council will charge a transfer fee as set out within the burial charges schedule.

Only the remaining term of the Exclusive Right of Burial will be carried over on transfer.

A revised grant shall be issued to the new Grantee.

A copy of the grant shall be retained by Witney Town Council and stored digitally.

13.1 Living Grantee

An owner of an Exclusive Right of Burial may transfer the right to another person at any time.

The original Grant must be produced together with supporting documentation.

The following documentation must be provided:

- Proof of identity of the current owner.
- Proof of identity of the proposed new Grantee.
- Proof of residency of the proposed new Grantee.

Where the proposed new Grantee does not meet the Council's residency requirements, or where satisfactory evidence of residency cannot be provided, the transfer will be treated as a non-resident transaction. The Council reserves the right to charge an additional amount, up to the full non-resident Exclusive Right of Burial fee applicable at the date of transfer, taking account of any resident fee already paid.

The fee shall only be payable where usable grave space remains available for a future full burial or additional ashes interment.

Written and signed confirmation of the transfer must be provided by the existing Grantee.

The transfer document must clearly identify the person receiving the Exclusive Right of Burial.

13.2 Deceased Grantee

Where the Grantee is the deceased person being interred within the grave space, a transfer of the Exclusive Right of Burial is not required before the interment takes place.

Where the Exclusive Right of Burial has not been spent and future use remains possible, transfer to a successor Grantee should be arranged.

There is no requirement to transfer the Exclusive Right of Burial immediately upon the death of the owner.

Transfer is only required where a beneficiary wishes to make use of an unspent Exclusive Right of Burial.

Documentation Required

To transfer the Exclusive Right of Burial following the death of a Grantee, the following documents must be provided:

- The original Exclusive Right of Burial grant.
- The deceased Grantee Will, where one exists.
- Original Grant of Probate or Letters of Administration where applicable.
- Proof of identity of the proposed new Grantee.

Statutory Declarations

Where the deceased owner did not specifically leave the Exclusive Right of Burial to a named beneficiary, the burial authority may transfer the right through a Statutory Declaration.

Such transfers may be made to a family member with a valid claim to the Exclusive Right of Burial.

The cost of investigations and due diligence associated with the transfer shall be borne by the applicant.

Where multiple family members have potential claims, each claimant must formally renounce their claim before a Statutory Declaration can be completed.

Where competing claimants cannot be contacted or do not renounce their claim, the Exclusive Right of Burial cannot be transferred.

Memorial Permission Pending Transfer

At the discretion of the burial authority, permission may be granted for a memorial to be erected before a transfer has been completed.

Any such permission shall be given on the basis that the applicant accepts responsibility for removal of the memorial at their own expense should a competing claimant subsequently establish a legal entitlement to the Exclusive Right of Burial.

14. Renewal of Exclusive Rights of Burial

A Grantee may renew an Exclusive Right of Burial on its expiry date or within the 90 day period immediately preceding expiry.

The renewal fee and renewal term shall be those in force at the date of renewal.

Witney Town Council will endeavour to contact Grantees whose Exclusive Rights of Burial are approaching expiry where usable grave space remains available.

The purpose of such contact is to allow the Grantee the opportunity to renew before the Council considers future re-use of available grave space.

Renewal procedures will only be considered where future burials can be accommodated without disturbing previous interments and where unused grave capacity remains available.

The Council may attempt contact using:

- Telephone.
- Post.
- Email.
- Updated contact details held on Council records.
- Notices attached to the memorial where appropriate.

If a period of 90 days has passed following the first contact attempt, no further attempts may be made.

Where all reasonable efforts to contact the Grantee have been exhausted and the renewal period has elapsed, the Council may commence procedures to re-use available grave space in accordance with its regulations.

15. Re-use of Grave Space

Following the expiry of an Exclusive Right of Burial, the Town Council may reclaim and reallocate any unused burial capacity remaining within the grave space, provided that a further interment can be accommodated without disturbing any existing interment.

Any re-use of grave space shall be undertaken in accordance with the Council's procedures for expired Exclusive Rights of Burial.

The Council reserves the right where appropriate, to raise the level of the ground above an existing single interment in order to create sufficient depth for a future burial. Such measures will only be considered following the expiry of the Exclusive Right of Burial.

16. Commonwealth War Graves

As the burial authority, Witney Town Council may grant permission to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission to install or maintain a memorial on an identified Commonwealth War Grave.

Exclusive Rights of Burial relating to Commonwealth War Graves may be granted or recognised in perpetuity.

The Town Council shall not exercise powers to remove a Commonwealth War Grave memorial without the consent of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

17. Public Graves

Public graves, also known as common graves, have no associated Exclusive Right of Burial and may be used where no alternative burial arrangements have been made. No private memorial, headstone, plaque or monument may be placed on a public grave.

18. Record Keeping

All interments shall be recorded on the date of burial within the cemetery burial register.

Interments shall also be recorded separately within the Register of Burials maintained by the Council.

The Register of Burials shall record:

- Surname
- Forenames
- Address
- Profession
- Age
- Date of death
- Place of death
- Date of burial
- Section and grave number

For woodland and meadow burials, the RFID tag number shall also be recorded within both the burial register and the Council's digital burial management system.

Full details of all interments shall be retained within the Council's digital burial records system.

Plans of graves are held in either digital or physical form at the Town Council offices.

19. Residency

For the purposes of these Regulations, a resident of Witney is defined as a person who:

- Currently resides within the Witney town boundary; or
- Has resided within Witney during the previous five years; or
- Has accumulated a total of thirty years' residence within Witney.

For non-residents, Exclusive Rights of Burial and interment fees will be charged at double the resident rate shown on the burial charges schedule.

Where a grave space is reserved, the Exclusive Right of Burial must be purchased and the residency status of the purchaser shall determine the applicable Exclusive Right of Burial fee.

The interment fee shall be determined by the residency status of the deceased rather than the owner of the Exclusive Right of Burial.

Proof of identity and residency may be required when purchasing an Exclusive Right of Burial.

Acceptable evidence may include:

- Driving licence
- Passport
- Utility bill dated within the previous three months
- Bank statement dated within the previous three months

Where the Certificate for Burial or Cremation records an address outside the Witney town boundary, proof of identity and residency may be required with the interment application

20. Reserving a Grave Space

Grave spaces may only be reserved for the following plot types:

- Lawn burial plots.
- Ashes plots.
- Family ashes plots.

Separate areas of the cemetery are designated for reserved grave spaces and immediate need burials.

When reserving a grave space, the Exclusive Right of Burial must be purchased.

No individual may reserve more than two burial plots.

21. Children's Funeral Fund

The Children's Funeral Fund for England (CFF) may assist with the funeral costs of a child under 18 or a baby stillborn after the 24th week of pregnancy. Witney Town Council will submit any eligible claim relating to its burial fees.

Applicants should contact the CFF directly for current information about eligibility, available support and the application process:

Website: childfuneralcharity.org.uk

Telephone: 01480 276088

Email: enquiries@childfuneralcharity.org.uk

The Children's Funeral Fund will only cover the cost of an appropriately sized grave suitable for the child being interred. Full body interments are currently available only within Windrush Cemetery, where adult, child and baby plots are provided. Witney Town Council will only claim funding for a grave size appropriate to the deceased. Where an applicant requests a full-sized double-depth adult grave, any difference in cost must be paid by the applicant. Where a child or baby plot is unavailable, a full-sized adult grave may be offered as an alternative.

22. Cemeteries Maintenance

22.1 Grave Mounds

For a period of one year following an interment, a soil mound will be maintained at approximately 20 centimetres above ground level.

This mound is required because excavated soil gradually recompacts over time following burial.

The grave mound shall not be planted during this period.

Flowers and wreaths may be placed on the grave, although they may be moved to the head of the grave when soil levels require topping up.

22.2 Levelling

Approximately one year after the date of interment, the grave may be levelled during the following spring or autumn maintenance programme.

The grave shall be levelled using topsoil free from large stones and reseeded with grass.

Graves may subsequently require additional levelling in order to maintain safe and consistent ground levels for cemetery maintenance purposes.

Levelling works are generally undertaken on a sectional basis.

Notice of works may be provided through signs displayed within the cemetery.

22.3 Grounds Maintenance

Tower Hill Cemetery and Windrush Cemetery are generally maintained as lawn cemeteries with regularly cut grassed areas.

The historic central section of Tower Hill Cemetery is maintained under a wildflower management regime.

The meadow and woodland burial sections of Windrush Cemetery are also maintained using wildflower management practices.

23. Memorial Testing

All memorials shall undergo a formal safety inspection every five years.

Safety inspections shall be carried out by Witney Town Council, either through its employees or appointed contractors acting on behalf of the burial authority. All inspections shall be undertaken by personnel trained in S.I.A.M. (Safety Inspection and Assessment of Memorials).

The inspection process uses non-intrusive methods to assess the safety and stability of memorials against recognised N.A.M.M. standards.

Advance notification of memorial testing may be provided through signs displayed within the relevant cemetery.

Responsibility for remedial works arising from memorial testing rests with the owner of the Exclusive Right of Burial.

The Town Council will attempt to contact the owner of the Exclusive Right of Burial and advise them of any remedial works considered necessary.

Where an adequate period has elapsed following notification and no remedial action has been taken or an immediate risk is identified, the Town Council may make the memorial safe using the most practical and economical method available.

Such actions may include:

- Laying the memorial flat on the ground.
- Fencing off the grave area for safety purposes.

24. Damage to Memorials

The Town Council accepts no liability for damage to memorials unless the damage results directly from the actions of cemetery operatives or contractors acting on behalf of the Council. Where such damage occurs, including where plant machinery strikes and fractures a memorial, the Council may accept responsibility for reasonable repair costs.

To establish liability, the incident must be documented.

Evidence may include:

- An incident report.
- Photographic evidence.
- Other supporting records.

Owners of Exclusive Rights of Burial are advised to obtain appropriate insurance cover for memorials, including public liability insurance where applicable.

25. Removing Headstones to Gain Access to Reserved Plots

Access to certain reserved grave spaces may require the temporary removal of existing memorials.

Notice of the proposed removal shall be issued, where possible, to the owner of the Exclusive Right of Burial recorded on the grant.

The owner of the Exclusive Right of Burial cannot refuse removal where it is necessary for the burial authority to facilitate access.

The Town Council shall meet the cost of removal and may offer cleaning of the memorial prior to its reinstatement.

26. Removing Headstones for a Second Interment

Where a further interment is proposed within a grave containing an existing memorial, responsibility for arranging and paying for the removal of the memorial rests with the Funeral Organiser. The memorial must be removed before excavation of the grave begins. Its presence must be identified when the first notice of interment is given.

27. Item Clearance

Additional cemetery clearance operations may be undertaken periodically throughout the year.

These are typically carried out following periods when large numbers of commemorative items are placed within the cemetery, including:

- Christmas.
- Easter.
- Mother's Day.
- Father's Day.

Such clearance operations will normally occur approximately one month after the relevant occasion.

28. Tree Works

The Council will not normally accept liability for damage caused by severe weather, natural events or the unforeseen failure of a tree or branch where the risk could not reasonably have been identified or prevented. This does not exclude liability arising from the Council's negligence or breach of a legal duty.

29. Stone Masons

Stone masons carrying out work within Witney Town Council cemeteries must be registered with the Town Council.

The following documentation must be provided annually and maintained in a current and valid condition.

Public Liability Insurance

Stone masons must maintain Public Liability Insurance with a minimum indemnity value of £5 million.

Risk Assessment

A risk assessment covering all activities undertaken within a burial ground must be provided.

The risk assessment should address all aspects of memorial installation, repair, maintenance and removal activities conducted within the cemeteries.

Professional Registration

Stone masons must be registered under the National Association of Memorial Masons (NAMM) Register of Qualified Memorial Fixers (RQMF) scheme.

All works must be carried out in accordance with the NAMM Code of Working Practice.

30. Memorials

30.1 Memorial Application and Approval Process

A memorial may only be commissioned by the Grantee and must receive the written approval of Witney Town Council before it is manufactured or installed.

Where a memorial is intended to cover two adjoining grave plots, the applicant must hold the Exclusive Right of Burial for both plots.

A completed memorial application must be submitted to the Council and must include full details of the proposed memorial, including its dimensions, materials, inscription and design. The memorial must comply with the specifications set out in the Council's Memorial Sizes document.

A permanent memorial may only be installed on a lawn grave after 12 months have elapsed from the date of interment. This period allows the ground to settle and the grass cover to become established.

During the 12-month waiting period, a temporary plaque or wooden cross may be placed on the grave. A temporary marker must not exceed 10 centimetres in width and 25 centimetres in height. Temporary markers may be removed during grass seeding or other grave-maintenance works and placed in storage within the cemetery depot.

Before installation, the memorial delivered to the cemetery will be checked against the approved application. Installation will be refused where the memorial:

- differs from the approved application;
- does not comply with the Council's Memorial Sizes document; or
- has not received written approval from the Council.

Any memorial installed without permission, or which differs from the approved application, will be removed by the Council. The Grantee will be responsible for all associated removal, storage and, where applicable, reinstatement costs.

30.2 Memorial Materials, Designs and Inscriptions

With the exception of approved wooden crosses, memorials must be manufactured from stone.

All inscriptions, images, symbols, artwork and designs must be dignified, respectful and suitable for the cemetery environment. The Council reserves the right to refuse any inscription, image, symbol, artwork or design that it considers offensive, inappropriate or unsuitable.

Every memorial must display the cemetery section and grave number on the rear of the base stone in lettering at least 15 millimetres high.

The Council's decision regarding the acceptability of the material, inscription or design of a memorial will be final.

30.3 Headstones

All headstones installed within Witney Town Council cemeteries must comprise:

- A foundation slab.
- A base stone.
- A headstone.

The upper surface of the foundation slab must be installed level with the surrounding ground level.

30.4 Monoliths

Where a monolith is installed without a foundation or shoe, a minimum of one-third of the total stone height must be located below ground level.

Where a monolith is installed using a shoe or foundation system, at least one-third of the total structure, including its foundation, must be located below ground level.

The maximum height of a monolith is 111 centimetres with at least 37 centimetres installed below ground level.

30.5 Wooden Crosses

Wooden crosses are permitted within the cemeteries provided they are constructed in a professional and durable manner. A memorial application must still be submitted.

The application must include a detailed drawing or photograph along with full measurements of each component of the cross.

Conditions of Approval

Wooden crosses must:

- Comply with the maximum memorial dimensions.
- Have at least one-third of their total height located below ground level.
- Be manufactured from hardwood.
- Not contain ornate or excessive decorative features.
- Display the name of the deceased through engraving or an attached plaque.
- Display the section and grave number on the reverse side.

Wooden crosses shall be inspected annually to assess their condition.

If a wooden cross deteriorates, the Town Council will contact the owner of the Exclusive Right of Burial and request restoration or removal. Where no action is taken within six weeks of the notification, cemetery operatives may remove the cross and place it into storage within the cemetery depot for no longer than 30 days before disposal.

30.6 Babies' and Children's Memorials

Due to the smaller dimensions of children's and baby graves, reduced memorial sizes apply.

The maximum permitted memorial height for these plots is 75 centimetres.

30.7 Memorial Tablets

Only sloping desk-style memorial tablets are permitted within the ashes path at Windrush Cemetery and must comply with the dimensions and specifications set out in the Memorial Sizes document.

31. Placement of Items on Graves and Gardens

Graves may be adorned with flowers and small commemorative items made from safe, non-hazardous materials, including wood, plastic and ceramic. Ceramic items are permitted as they generally present less risk than glass, although they should be sufficiently robust and maintained in a safe condition. All items must be placed within the designated garden area or on the memorial foundation slab. Items placed elsewhere, or found to be broken or hazardous, may be removed without prior notice and stored at the cemetery depot for collection. Witney Town Council accepts no responsibility for items lost or damaged during removal or storage.

Prohibited Items

The following items are not permitted within the cemeteries. This list is not exhaustive, and Witney Town Council may prohibit other items where necessary for safety, maintenance or the appropriate appearance of the cemetery:

- Glass objects, including candle holders, photo frames and ornaments containing glass.
- Shrubs and trees planted in or placed on graves.
- Electrical items, including solar-powered lights.
- Fencing, kerbing or other structures intended to define or enclose a grave.
- Large ornamental items, including statues, unless approved by the Council.
- Balloons and large floral displays as permanent grave adornments.

Balloons and large floral tributes placed following an interment may remain temporarily but will normally be removed seven days after the interment.

Prohibited, unsafe or unauthorised items may be removed without prior notice and disposed of immediately. Where an item appears to have significant financial or personal value, the Council may retain it temporarily for collection. However, the Council cannot reasonably identify the sentimental value of every item and does not guarantee that any removed item will be retained.

Where appropriate, the Council may contact the holder of the Exclusive Right of Burial and allow up to six weeks for a large or unauthorised item to be removed. If no action is taken, the Council may remove, store or dispose of the item.

32. Garden Area

All lawn graves include a designated garden area which may be used by the owner of the Exclusive Right of Burial for the placement of permitted commemorative items.

The permitted garden area is the width of the memorial foundation slab and extends to a depth of 45 centimetres from the base of the memorial.

Where no memorial has been installed and the owner wishes only to create a garden area, the permitted area may be extended to a maximum square area measuring 90 centimetres by 90 centimetres.

The Exclusive Right of Burial must still be purchased before a garden area may be established.

Fencing, kerbing or other forms of enclosure are not permitted around garden areas and shrubs and trees must not be planted within garden areas.

33. Vaults

The construction and reopening of vaults shall be strictly managed by Witney Town Council.

Applications may be submitted for the construction of the following types of vault at Tower Hill Cemetery or Windrush Cemetery:

- Brick vaults.
- Concrete block vaults.

- Concrete chambers.
- Vault liners.

Applications will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and may be refused where the installation of a vault is not considered practical or appropriate.

Factors that may influence a decision include:

- Ground conditions.
- Availability of suitable plot sizes.
- The presence of neighbouring oversized plots.
- Achievable excavation depth.

Vault construction should ideally be undertaken at the same time as the reservation of the grave space.

Where a vault is requested at the time of an interment application, the burial timescale shall be determined at the discretion of Witney Town Council.

Charges for vault construction shall comprise:

- The contractor construction cost incurred by the Council.
- An administration and project management fee.

Interments into vaults shall be charged at the applicable single-depth burial rate.

Reopening of Vaults

Notice of a request to reopen an existing vault must be provided to Witney Town Council before an interment booking is made.

This requirement allows Council staff sufficient time to:

- Open the vault.
- Inspect its condition.
- Measure the internal dimensions.
- Confirm the maximum coffin size that can be accommodated.

34. Review and Adoption Information

These Cemetery Regulations shall be monitored and reviewed by the Council's Policy, Governance and Finance Committee every twelve months, or sooner where changes in legislation require review.

Adopted by the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee on xxx

Minute Number: xxxx

Proposed Review Date: xxx.

Witney Town Council
51B Market Square
Witney
OX28 6AG

Email: info@witney-tc.gov.uk

Telephone: 01993 704379.

POLICY, GOVERNANCE & FINANCE SUB-COMMITTEE



Agenda Item: Community Asset Acquisition and Management Policy

Meeting Date: Monday, 28 September 2026

Contact Officer: Town Clerk/CEO – Sharon Groth

The purpose of this report is to introduce the draft Community Asset Acquisition and Management Policy and its supporting Decision Framework, and to seek the Committee's endorsement before the Policy is referred to Full Council for adoption.

Background

Opportunities may arise for the Town Council to acquire, lease, manage or facilitate the management of land, buildings and services that provide a benefit to the community. Such opportunities may result from local government reorganisation, devolution of asset transfers from principal authorities, developer contributions, community initiatives or approaches from other public and charitable bodies.

The potential benefits can be significant, but each proposal may also create long-term legal, financial, operational and governance responsibilities. A clear framework is therefore required to ensure that opportunities are considered consistently, transparently and in the long-term interests of the Council and the community.

The matter was considered by the Personnel Sub-Committee at its meeting on 29 July 2026, when it was agreed that the proposed Policy and supporting Decision Framework should be referred to the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee for consideration.

Proposed Policy and Decision Framework

The draft Community Asset Acquisition and Management Policy sets out the principles that will guide the Council when considering whether to acquire or take responsibility for a community asset. It does not commit the Council to accepting any particular transfer or opportunity. Each proposal would continue to be considered on its own merits, having regard to the Council's statutory powers, strategic priorities, financial position, available resources and the anticipated community benefit.

The supporting Decision Framework provides practical guidance through the main stages of assessment: identifying the opportunity; initial strategic appraisal; outline feasibility; stakeholder and community engagement; preparation of a business case; formal Council decision; due diligence and legal processes; transfer and mobilisation; and subsequent review.

The Framework is intended to guide rather than prescribe the process. It may be applied proportionately and adapted to reflect the nature, complexity, value, risks and timescales of an individual proposal. It also requires the Council to consider the most appropriate long-term governance and delivery model rather than presume that direct Council management will always be the preferred option.

Together, the Policy and Framework should provide Members and Officers with a consistent basis for assessing future opportunities, commissioning proportionate due diligence and identifying the information required before the Council makes a final commitment.

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.' The proposed Policy will help ensure that future asset opportunities are aligned with those priorities and contribute to sustainable community benefit.

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 Policy requires equality, diversity, accessibility and inclusion to be considered throughout the assessment of an asset opportunity and when evaluating community benefit and future use.
- b) **Biodiversity** - Environmental obligations and biodiversity implications would be considered during feasibility work and due diligence where relevant to the asset concerned.
- c) **Crime & Disorder** - The assessment of proposed uses, operating arrangements and site management would include relevant community safety and security considerations.
- d) **Environment & Climate Emergency** - Environmental sustainability, climate resilience and whole-life implications are included within the Policy's guiding principles and decision-making framework.

Risk

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

The Policy is intended to reduce the risk of the Council accepting an asset without a clear understanding of its condition, liabilities, costs, legal position, operational requirements or governance arrangements. It supports proportionate investigation, professional advice, community engagement and a documented business case before any final decision is taken.

Social Value

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

A consistent approach will help the Council identify opportunities capable of protecting valued facilities, improving local services and delivering lasting community benefit. The Framework also encourages meaningful engagement and consideration of community-led and partnership delivery models where these offer effective and sustainable stewardship.

Financial implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from adoption of the Policy.

Financial implications associated with an individual asset opportunity would be assessed through the Framework, including capital investment, whole-life costs, revenue implications, staffing, maintenance, income, reserves, external funding, borrowing and any appropriate exit strategy.

Recommendations

Members are invited to:

1. Consider, amend if necessary, and endorse the draft Community Asset Acquisition and Management Policy and the supporting Decision Framework attached at Appendix A;
2. recommend the Policy and Decision Framework to Full Council for adoption; and
3. authorise the Town Clerk/CEO to make any minor typographical, formatting or consequential amendments required before presentation to Full Council, provided these do not alter the substance of the documents.

Draft Community Asset Acquisition and Management Policy

Policy Statement

Witney Town Council recognises that community assets play an important role in supporting the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of the town. The Council will consider opportunities to acquire, manage or facilitate the management of community assets where doing so delivers long-term public benefit, represents value for money and supports the Council's Strategic Plan.

1. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to establish the principles that will guide Witney Town Council when considering opportunities to acquire, own, lease, manage or facilitate the management of community assets.

The Policy recognises that opportunities may arise through:

- Local Government Reorganisation;
- Asset transfers from principal authorities;
- Developer contributions;
- Community initiatives;
- Charitable organisations;
- Public bodies; or
- Other opportunities that support the Council's Strategic Plan.

This Policy provides the overarching principles to support transparent, robust and proportionate decision making.

2. Policy Objectives

The Council aims to:

- safeguard community assets for public benefit;
- support thriving and resilient communities;
- secure value for money;
- ensure long-term financial sustainability;
- encourage community involvement;
- consider innovative governance arrangements;
- manage risk effectively;
- protect public funds.

3. Scope

This Policy applies whenever the Council is invited to consider:

- accepting ownership;
- accepting a lease;
- accepting management responsibility;
- acquiring land or buildings;
- establishing a new community facility;
- taking on additional public services linked to an asset.

The Council will ensure that any proposed acquisition is supported by an appropriate statutory power and complies with all relevant legislation.

Nothing within this Policy places the Council under any obligation to accept the transfer, ownership or management of any community asset. Each opportunity will be considered on its own merits, having regard to the Council's statutory powers, financial position, strategic priorities, available resources and the long-term interests of the community.

For the purposes of this Policy, a *community asset* may include (but is not limited to):

- parks and open spaces;
- sports facilities;
- community centres;
- civic buildings;
- public conveniences;
- car parks;
- allotments;
- heritage assets;
- play areas;
- recreational facilities;
- commercial premises held for community benefit;
- other land or buildings that contribute to the wellbeing of the community.

4. Guiding Principles

Throughout every stage the Council should have regard to:

- Community benefit
- Value for money
- Long-term financial sustainability
- Strategic fit
- Transparency
- Appropriate community engagement
- Proportionate decision making
- Legal compliance
- Environmental sustainability and climate resilience

- Risk management
- Equality, diversity, accessibility and inclusion

5. Decision Making

The Council has adopted a **Decision Framework for the Consideration of Community Asset Transfers & New Asset Opportunities**, attached at **Appendix A**, which will normally be followed when considering significant community asset acquisitions. Where it is considered appropriate to depart from the Framework, the reasons will be clearly documented within the report to Members.

6. Community Engagement

The Council recognises that meaningful engagement is fundamental to successful community asset ownership.

The scale of engagement will be proportionate to:

- the value of the asset;
- the significance to the community;
- the potential financial implications;
- the number of stakeholders affected.

Engagement may include:

- public consultation;
- stakeholder workshops;
- surveys;
- user group meetings;
- statutory consultation where required.

7. Governance & Delivery Models

This framework is intended to provide guidance rather than prescribe a fixed process. Every opportunity to acquire or manage a community asset will present different circumstances, opportunities, risks and timescales. The Council will apply this framework proportionately, taking account of the nature and complexity of each proposal, and may adapt the sequence or extent of individual stages where appropriate.

In determining whether to acquire and how best to manage a community asset, the Council will seek to identify the governance and delivery model that best secures long-term community benefit, financial sustainability and effective stewardship of public assets. Direct management by the Council will not automatically be presumed to be the preferred option. Alternative delivery models, including management by existing

community organisations, charitable trusts, community interest companies, sports clubs, partnership arrangements or other appropriate bodies, will be considered where they better achieve these objectives and align with the Council's Strategic Plan.

Governance Model	Typical Circumstances
Direct Council Management	Civic buildings, parks, open spaces
Lease to Community Organisation	Sports clubs, community centres
Community Trust	Multi-use community facilities
Community Interest Company	Commercial/community mixed use
Charitable Incorporated Organisation	Charitable facilities
Partnership Agreement	Joint public services
Service Level Agreement	Specialist operational services
Charitable Trust administered by the Town Council	Heritage, civic or endowed charitable assets

8. Financial Considerations

Cover:

- Whole life costs including ongoing maintenance
- Capital investment
- Revenue implications
- Reserves
- External funding
- Income generation
- Borrowing
- Staffing
- Asset management plans
- Exit strategy where appropriate

9. Risk Management

Requires consideration of:

- Legal risk

- Financial risk
- Reputational risk
- Operational risk
- Environmental risk
- Community expectations
- Future liabilities
- Health & Safety risk

10. Monitoring

The implementation of this Policy will be monitored through individual project reviews and, where appropriate, periodic reports to Members. Lessons learned from completed projects will be used to inform future asset acquisition decisions.

11. Review

This policy will be reviewed every four years or following significant legislative or organisational change.

Version	1.0
Adopted by	Full Council
Date adopted	xx xxxx 2026
Review date	xx xxxx 2030
Policy Owner	Town Clerk & CEO
Responsible Committee	Policy, Governance & Finance Committee

Decision Framework for the Consideration of Community Asset Transfers & New Asset Opportunities

Stage 1 – Opportunity Identified

Initial Information Received

- Asset identified by another authority, organisation or developer.
- Establish the nature of the opportunity.
- Does it benefit the residents of Witney?
- Identify any deadlines or expressions of interest required.
- Confirm whether there is sufficient information to undertake an initial assessment.

Outcome

- Proceed to initial appraisal or decline opportunity.

Stage 2 – Initial Strategic Appraisal

Consider:

- Does the opportunity support the Council's Strategic Plan?
- Does it benefit the residents of Witney?
- Does it align with the Council's powers and objectives?
- Are there obvious financial or operational constraints?
- Are there any immediate legal concerns?

Outcome

- Report to Members recommending whether to explore the opportunity further.

Stage 3 – Outline Feasibility

If Members agree in principle:

Undertake proportionate investigations, which may include:

- Asset condition
- Existing liabilities
- Revenue implications
- Staffing implications
- Maintenance requirements
- Legal considerations
- Health & Safety

- Environmental obligations
- Funding opportunities
- Assessment of whether the asset is best retained within the Council or delivered through an alternative governance model.
- Income generation potential
- Risks
- Opportunities

Professional advice commissioned where appropriate.

Stage 4 – Stakeholder & Community Engagement

Where appropriate and proportionate, consider engagement with:

- Existing users
- Local residents
- Community groups
- Sports clubs
- Partner organisations
- Ward Members
- Other stakeholders

Engagement methods may include:

- Public meetings
- Surveys
- Workshops
- Focus groups
- Online consultation
- Targeted stakeholder meetings

The scale and method of engagement will depend upon the nature, complexity and significance of the proposed asset transfer.

Stage 5 – Business Case

Prepare a report for Members setting out:

- Strategic benefits
- Community benefits
- Financial implications
- Capital costs
- Ongoing revenue costs
- Staffing implications

- Governance implications
- Risks and mitigations
- Consultation outcomes
- Recommended governance and delivery model
- Options appraisal

Governance & Delivery Model Assessment

As part of the business case, consideration should be given to the most appropriate long-term governance and management arrangements for the asset. Depending on the nature of the opportunity, options may include:

- Direct management by Witney Town Council.
- Management by an existing community organisation or charity.
- Management by a sports club or user group.
- Lease or Service Level Agreement with a third party.
- Establishment of a Community Trust, Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), Community Interest Company (CIC) or another appropriate vehicle.
- Partnership management with another public body or organisation.
- A phased approach, whereby the Town Council initially manages the asset before transferring operational responsibility to another body.

For each option, consideration should be given to:

- Governance arrangements.
- Financial sustainability.
- Community capacity and capability.
- Skills and experience.
- Legal implications.
- Risk allocation.
- Accountability.
- Long-term resilience.
- Community benefit.

Stage 6 – Council Decision
--

Council considers:

- Business case
- Community feedback
- Financial affordability
- Risk profile
- Long-term sustainability
- Recommended governance and delivery model

Decision

- Approve
- Do Not Approve

- Request further work is undertaken

Stage 7 – Due Diligence & Legal Process

If approved:

- Legal investigations
- Surveys
- Funding agreements
- Contract negotiations
- Insurance
- Asset management planning
- Operational planning
- Staffing arrangements (if applicable)

Stage 8 – Asset Transfer

- Completion of legal documentation
- Handover arrangements
- Communications plan
- Operational mobilisation
- Budget implementation
- Governance arrangements

Stage 9 – Review

Following acquisition:

- Post-implementation review
- Financial monitoring
- Performance monitoring
- Community impact
- Lessons learned

Decision-Making Principles - Throughout every stage the Council should have regard to:

- Community benefit, in particular to residents of Witney
- Value for money
- Long-term financial sustainability
- Strategic fit
- Transparency
- Appropriate community engagement

- Proportionate decision making
- Legal compliance
- Environmental sustainability
- Risk management

Important Note - Applying this Framework

This framework is intended to provide guidance rather than prescribe a fixed process. Every opportunity to acquire or manage a community asset will present different circumstances, opportunities, risks and timescales. The Town Council will apply this framework proportionately, taking account of the nature and complexity of each proposal, and may adapt the sequence or extent of individual stages where appropriate.

In determining whether to acquire and how best to manage a community asset, the Council will seek to identify the governance and delivery model that best secures long-term community benefit, financial sustainability and effective stewardship of public assets. Direct management by the Town Council will not automatically be presumed to be the preferred option. Alternative delivery models, including management by existing community organisations, charitable trusts, community interest companies, sports clubs, partnership arrangements or other appropriate bodies, will be considered where they better achieve these objectives and align with the Council's Strategic Plan.

POLICY, GOVERNANCE & FINANCE COMMITTEE



Agenda Item: Grant Monitoring – Youth Services Grants 2025

Meeting Date: Monday, 28th September 2026

Contact Officer: Deputy Town Clerk
(Assisted by: Finance Apprentice)

The purpose of this report is to update Members on the progress and outcomes of projects funded under the 2025 Youth Services Grant Scheme, made under the General Power of Competence, and to confirm that the Council is satisfied that the grants have been used for their approved purposes.

Background

The Council's Youth Services Grant Monitoring section states:

‘Successful applicants are expected to comply fully with any monitoring requests from the Council and must agree to this when signing the grant agreement. This may include a review of their project during the period of funding, checking how the money was spent, reports on the activity funded, feedback from young people and any other record of the activity funded (e.g. promotional flyers and posters).

- Grants should be spent within the year, for the purpose for which they were given
- The Council reserves the right to request a copy of invoices and/or other documentation as evidence that the expenditure has been incurred
- Organisations receiving grant-aid in excess of £500, as a condition, are required to provide the Council with a written report within 12 months of the award date to demonstrate how the funds were expended
- If an organisation dissolves the Council expects the organisation to reimburse the grant-aid awarded
- Any unspent grant funding will be recovered by the town council.
- Recipients of a grant from the town council should acknowledge the fact on all relevant literature.

Successful applicants will be required to complete a monitoring report for the town council towards the end of the funding agreement.’

Current Situation

Several grant reports/invoices have been received in to meet this requirement.

Bright Futures Oxfordshire

The organisation was awarded £3,648 towards Parenting courses. An update report on the services provided in receipt of the grant is attached as **Appendix A**.

Buttercross Scouts

The organisation was awarded £3,500 towards activity equipment/ropes for bridges. Invoices and pictures are provided in receipt of the grant and are attached as **Appendix B**.

Parish of Witney

The organisation was awarded £2,500 towards a summer enrichment camp. An update report on the services provided in receipt of the grant is attached as **Appendix C**.

Witney Food Revolution

The organisation was awarded £2,150 towards a teen focused food skills programme. At the time of writing, no information has been provided. Officers will continue to take appropriate steps to obtain this information.

Yellow Submarine

The organisation was awarded £2,000 towards Witney Youth Club summer activities. An update report on the services provided in receipt of the grant is attached as **Appendix D**.

West Oxfordshire Levellers

The organisation was awarded £1,000 towards a Girls Rugby League Activity Day. An update report on the services provided in receipt of the grant is attached as **Appendix E**.

4th Girl Guides

The organisation was awarded £1,000 to assist buying camp tent & equipment. 20 invoices have been provided in receipt of the grants. These are not attached but show evidence of the grant being expended.

Friends of Springfield School

The organisation was awarded £2,850 towards therapeutic horse-riding sessions. The sessions were unable to take place, so the grant was not awarded.

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** – Considered at the time of awards.
- b) **Biodiversity** – Considered at the time of awards.
- c) **Crime & Disorder** – Considered at the time of the awards.
- d) **Environment & Climate Emergency** – Considered at the time of the awards.

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.

Considered at the time of awards. Failure to monitor grant recipients would represent a weakness in the Council's internal control and assurance arrangements, potentially increasing exposure to financial and reputational risk.

Social Value

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

Considered at the time of awards.

Financial implications

- The above schemes and project grants were allocated from the 2025-26 youth services grant budget. There are no implications unless the Committee decides any project has not been undertaken to its understanding or satisfaction.

Recommendations

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

1. Whether any further information is required in relation to any listed grant recipients (where information has already been received).



We were very grateful to be awarded a grant of £3,648 from the Youth Services Fund, to enable us to launch SPARK, a parenting support initiative in Witney, as a means to improving the home-life and general well-being of young people in the town.

We initially proposed running six courses, each lasting six weeks - three aimed at parents of primary children and three for parents of teenagers.

In reality, due to practicalities and time constraints on staff/volunteers, we have ended up running one primary years course in Tower Hill Primary School and we are about to start our second one, this time in the community. In Tower Hill Primary we started well with two parents, but sadly they both stopped coming to the weekly sessions. We are not sure why that happened but conversation with the school staff confirmed that this is not unusual based on previous attempts to offer support. We are hopeful that running the course in the community will remove some of the stigma and reluctance to attend. In fact, we have seven people signed up already for the new course, four of whom are parents/grandparents of children at Tower Hill Primary. After this six week 'Parenting - the primary years' course is complete, we will move on to running a 'Parenting - the teenage years' course in the same venue, and will target parents from the secondary schools in the town.

We have also run three successful stand-alone parenting sessions on the topic of supporting children's emotional well-being. Since anxiety and mental health issues are a major concern amongst young people at the moment, we felt this material would be helpful and it was definitely well received. We reached 18 parents and carers of children of a range of ages, as well as three teachers and church youth and children's workers with these sessions. We are planning two more of these sessions this term. Feedback in person was very positive, plus all those who completed feedback forms (90%) said they would be interested in further support, either by way of a full course or further stand-alone sessions.

The funding covered the cost of training for the course facilitator and approximately 80 salary hours for admin, marketing and delivery, as well as venue hire and course materials, as follows:

Training - £240
Salary - £1,156
Venue hire - £750
Resources - £200
Total spent: £2,346
Balance: £1,302

We intend to use the balance of the grant to cover salary and refreshments, venue hire and printing for the courses and stand-alone sessions we are running this term. As such, the grant will be fully spent by December 2026.

INVOICE

PAGE 1/1
DOCUMENT DATE 01.04.2025
DOCUMENT NUMBER 14079692

CUSTOMER NO. C005905
VAT NO.
ACCOUNT CONTACT Craig Jones

YOUR REFERENCE

Witney Buttercross Scout Group
Robert Kinchin
17 Rapide Cresent
Witney
OX29 7BP

Witney Buttercross Scout Group
The Witney Buttercross Scout Hut
Marlborough Lane
Witney
OX28 6DY
EORI:

Currency: GBP

LINE #	ITEM CODE	DESCRIPTION	ESTIMATED DESPATCH DAY	COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	COMMODITY CODE	QTY	PRICE	DISCOUNT %	VAT %	TOTAL
1	10017-102-218	GT 7.8 Club Saffron	22/04/2025	United Kingdom	89039910	2	436.88	0.00	20.00	873.75
2	10018-102-218	GT Max 8.10 Club Saffron	22/04/2025	United Kingdom	89039910	2	436.88	0.00	20.00	873.75
3	10019-102-216	GTS 7.5 Club Red	22/04/2025	United Kingdom	89039910	2	436.88	0.00	20.00	873.75
4	10026-102-209	Mamba 7.6 Club Lime	22/04/2025	United Kingdom	89039910	2	468.13	0.00	20.00	936.25

ADDITIONAL EXPENSES

#	DESCRIPTION	NET	TAX%	TAX	GROSS
1					

Invoice Subtotal: GBP 3,557.50
Total Before Tax: GBP 3,557.50
Total Tax Amount: GBP 711.50
Total Amount GBP 4,269.00

PAYMENT DETAILS

Payment Terms: Proforma

Please Remit to:
Account No: 01506268
Sort Code: 301888
Swift/BIC Code: LOYDGB21445
IBAN: GB76LOYD30188801506268

Lloyds Bank plc
01506268
301888
LOYDGB21445
GB76LOYD30188801506268



Impact of funded Enrichment Summer & Autumn Programme

The Enrichment Summer and Autumn Programme, delivered in partnership between St Mary's Church Youth Chaplain and Enrichment Manager from Witney College, has made a significant and measurable difference to the confidence, skills, and future prospects of young people in our community. Across both programmes, students engaged in high-quality learning experiences that strengthened their wellbeing, expanded their opportunities, and provided vital support at key transition points in their education.

During the **summer programme**, **12 young people** took part in creative workshops, team-building activities, and community-focused projects. These sessions helped participants develop resilience, self-expression, and positive peer relationships—skills that are essential for navigating both education and early adulthood.

The **autumn programme** built on this foundation, with **15 students** receiving targeted support at Witney College. Sessions included CV writing, job applications, interview preparation, and personal development. These activities equipped learners with practical tools for employment and further education, directly addressing local skills gaps and supporting young people to take confident next steps.

A particularly significant outcome emerged from this cohort: **Out of the 15 young people who took part in the autumn programme, 4 successfully gained employment using the CVs they created during the sessions.**

These students also reported that the programme helped them understand what employers look for when hiring, giving them the confidence and insight needed to present themselves effectively and secure real job opportunities.

For some students, the release of summer exam results brought disappointment, particularly for those who did not pass English or Maths GCSE. However, the programme played a crucial role in helping them process these emotions and understand that their pathways remain open. Through reassurance, guidance, and encouragement, students recognised that they could resit their exams and continue progressing to the next level of their course. This support restored hope, motivation, and a sense of direction at a pivotal moment.

Together, the summer and autumn programmes created a safe, empowering environment where young people could explore their strengths, gain new experiences, and receive consistent encouragement from trusted adults. Many students reported feeling more prepared for employment, more connected to their community, and more confident in themselves. These outcomes demonstrate the programme's lasting impact and highlight the importance of continued investment in youth development initiatives.

Programme Timing and Engagement Challenges

The late release of funding for the Enrichment Programme created unavoidable delays in promoting the offer to young people. As a result, the team was unable to advertise the summer provision early enough to reach Year 11 students transitioning to college—an important group who would have particularly benefited from the additional support, confidence-building activities, and structured transition opportunities.

However, once funding was confirmed, the team acted quickly to ensure the programme reached as many learners as possible. This enabled delivery across both **Witney College** and the **Common Leys campus**, ensuring that students from the wider college community could still access meaningful enrichment opportunities.

Although the timing meant a key cohort was missed, the programme still achieved **strong engagement**, and the learning from this experience will support **earlier communication, wider reach, and even greater impact** in future years. This adaptability demonstrates the programme's resilience and the team's commitment to ensuring young people receive the support they need.

Enrichment programme at a Glance

- **12 young people** took part in the **Summer Programme**
- **15 students** engaged in the **Autumn Programme**
- **4 young people gained employment** using CVs created during the programme and the knowledge gained about employer expectations
- A balanced mix of **creative, confidence-building, and skills-focused** activities
- Targeted support included **CV writing, job applications, and interview preparation**
- Students who did not pass English/Maths GCSE said the programme helped them understand their **options to resit** and continue progressing
- Many reported feeling **more confident** exploring different areas of training and college courses
- Students felt **better prepared for employment and more connected to their community.**

Summary and Next Steps

The Enrichment Summer and Autumn Programme has demonstrated significant impact, equipping young people with confidence, practical skills, and meaningful support at key moments in their educational journey. With **27 students engaged across both programmes**, and **4 young people gaining employment** directly through the CVs and employer-insight sessions delivered, the programme has proven its value as a targeted intervention that strengthens wellbeing, employability, and community connection.

The learning gained from this year's delivery—particularly around timing, communication, and reaching key transition groups—will inform stronger, earlier engagement in future cycles. Despite the late release of funding, the programme achieved strong participation across both Witney College and the Common Leys campus, demonstrating adaptability and clear demand from young people.

Looking ahead, the Enrichment Programme will not stand alone. It will form a core part of the **new Youth Café initiative**, alongside the **Cherish Your Wellbeing workshop**. Together, these strands will create a joined-up, year-round offer that supports young people's personal development, emotional wellbeing, and readiness for future education and employment. By integrating enrichment, wellbeing, and a consistent after-school safe space, the new initiative the 'Youth Café' will provide a holistic support pathway that meets the needs of young people across Witney and the surrounding area.

Sustainability

The Enrichment Programme has shown measurable success, including **4 young people gaining employment** using CVs created during the sessions, and many more reporting increased confidence, clearer pathways, and improved readiness for further education and work. The Cherish Your Wellbeing workshop adds a vital layer of emotional and mental-health support, helping young people build resilience and navigate the pressures of adolescence.

To maintain and expand this integrated offer, **investment in staffing and infrastructure is critical**. The initiative currently relies on limited facilitator hours and volunteer capacity, which cannot sustain the scale of need or the depth of relational work required. Funding is therefore needed to secure the employment of dedicated staff—particularly a **Youth Chaplain**—who can provide consistent leadership, safeguarding oversight, programme delivery, and long-term relational support for young people. A staffed model is essential for continuity, quality, and the ability to respond to the complex needs many young people are facing, including food insecurity, mental-health pressures, and barriers to employment.

The next steps include:

- **Embedding the Enrichment Programme and Cherish Your Wellbeing workshop into the new initiative Youth Café's annual delivery plan.**
- **Strengthening early communication and outreach to ensure Year 11, 12 and 13 students and other key groups are reached in time.**
- **Building on employer-focused sessions to expand opportunities for work experience, mentoring, and employment pathways.**
- **Continuing to gather youth voice to shape future sessions and ensure the offer remains relevant, accessible, and impactful.**
- **Exploring funding opportunities to sustain and expand the Youth Café, including staffing, resources, and specialist workshop delivery.**
- **To maintain and expand this integrated offer, investment in staffing and including staffing, resources, and specialist workshop delivery.**
- **Seeking investment to employ a Youth Chaplain, ensuring consistent leadership, relational support, and long-term programme development.**
- **Developing partnerships with local councils, schools, and community organisations to widen reach and strengthen impact**





Yellow Submarine Report to Witney Town Council

Yellow Submarine was so grateful to receive the fabulous Witney Town Council Youth Services 2025/6 grant of £2000 towards its activities for 11-18s from Witney, who have mild to moderate learning disabilities and/or autism.

Last summer our Witney based activities included trips to Cogges Farm, a treasure hunt, cycling and mini golf, a race across Witney, pizza making, swimming and trampolining, archery and climbing, gaming, trips to the park, an outdoor day with axe throwing, tennis and a trip to Blenheim Palace Adventure Playground.



We love to put together a programme which offers a real variety –

so can be enjoyed by everyone, whether bold or cautious, who may be coming with their friends or attending Yellow Sub on their own and for the very first time. We make sure everyone is surrounded by reassurance and enabled to thrive.



Our Witney Activity Manager, Beth reports: 'We supported 87 young people across the Summer, across Witney and Abingdon. From a Witney perspective, the activities we ran allowed us to offer 171 spaces across the Summer, this was with 61 different YP attending multiple times each week (if that makes sense!).'

We deliver similar holiday activities during the Easter holidays and all half terms, and Christmas-themed activities and trips at the end of the year.



www.yellowsubmarine.org.uk

Yellow Submarine Holidays is a company limited by guarantee

Registered company no: 6619694

Registered charity no: 1136735

Registered address: 12 Park End Street Oxford, OX1 1HH



During term times, we run our Witney 'SubSquad' Youth Club weekly on Tuesday evenings, and we take Witney members on our residentials – last year we ran four 11-18s trips, from an August week at Ufton Court near Reading to a single night 'sleepover' at Hill End, and two 2-night stays, visiting Blenheim at Christmas and Drayton Manor theme park in October.



In addition to the grant funding, we were also so grateful to have the chance to show our short film to the Annual Town Meeting in March this year, and delighted to be invited to provide the 'Guest Barrow' for the 2026 Carnival. Sensory Garden in a Barrow has made a lovely project for one of our Witney based 'Reach' groups. We look forward to being at the Carnival as always, proudly parading - our members absolutely love being part of it!



www.yellowsubmarine.org.uk
Yellow Submarine Holidays is a company limited by guarantee
Registered company no: 6619694
Registered charity no: 1136735
Registered address: 12 Park End Street Oxford, OX1 1HH



Subject: Youth Services Grant Report
Organisation: West Oxfordshire Levellers RL
Event funded: Girls Rugby League Skills Day, 8th March 2026
Author: Ian Ferry, Club Secretary
Date: 8th September 2026

Introduction

This report defines the reasons for our grant request, our aims for the project, how the skills day proceeded; and how the funding has benefitted female uptake and participation following the event.

The Club

We are a community focused, not for profit, Rugby League club providing different forms of the sport to Primary and Secondary aged children, along with Adult opportunities.

Core Values & Vision: Inclusion • Support • Growth • Respect • Resilience • Togetherness • Fun

We promote staying healthy by having fun. We use sport as a tool to develop players, and young people especially. We teach the skills needed to work as a successful team. We support player confidence to use individual inspiration when opportunities arise, within and outside the club. We aim to work with partners to facilitate young player opportunities to gain insights into the business world as they prepare for life after school. Work with partners to get adult workers into sport and improve fitness whilst making new friends.

The health and wellbeing of players is the highest priority. We have at least one first aider for every coaching session or match. All senior coaches are fully qualified with valid DBS checks. We align with national standards and seek new approaches to meet Physical and Mental Health needs. We don't alienate. We encourage players with additional needs to join us. For those who wish to play in matches, we assist players and their families in RFL registration.

We are dedicated in facilitating Primary and Secondary children in trying something different, making new friends, keeping active, building confidence and having fun. As the club grows, we aim to enhance support of female players; and those from ethnic, cultural or religious minorities to ensure we thrive as an all-inclusive club.

Background to initiative

Female team sport is growing like never before. However, taking that first step by joining a club can be much harder for females, especially if they don't know anyone at a club. Some teams are afraid of asking the question or afraid of hearing the answer:

"How can we make our club more attractive and accessible for women and girls?"

The Levellers fully embrace movements such as "This Girl Can" and "I Will if You Will", by encouraging any interested female player to come to a free taster session with a friend (who doesn't necessarily have to join in themselves). Our coaches include 1 woman and 1 girl who focus on primary development. 3 of our 6 sponsors are female owned companies; and providing opportunities for women and girls is high on their agendas.

As a club, we want to be led by our players and parents. Through engagement with our existing female members and interested parties, we will provide answers to these questions:

- What do female athletes want from a team?
- How do they want it to work?
- What barriers need breaking?
- What facilities do they need?
- What don't they need or don't want to hear?
- What does their sense of achievement look like?
- What will make them look forward to their next session or match?
- How much do they want to get involved with the club?
- Have they been disappointed by a club before? (any type of club)
- Are they worried what people at school will think? (friends and teachers)
- Are they concerned about not fitting in or not knowing anything about the sport?

The Plan

Building on the successful enrolment of girls to our Madley Brook Primary School after-school sessions, West Oxfordshire Levellers RL intended to hold a Girls Rugby League Activity Day for school years 2 to 11 on International Women's Day 2026. The information and activities were to be specifically designed for girls; and be appropriate for those currently partaking in sports and those who do not. See schedule in the appendix.

Each activity was to be themed around Rugby League to include skill development, problem solving, team-working/building and learning leadership qualities. The skills learned and advice provided can be adapted to other activities to help develop girls as the individuals they are. Success would not be measured by strength, stamina or ability to play; but involvement and enjoyment.

Promotion

Our promotion for the event took many forms, from a local online TV interview, use of our social media (including Facebook), creating flyers and posters, linking with school sports leads; and taking full advantage of the kind offer to use Witney Town Council's window display. The latter received positive feedback from those visiting the council offices, people waiting for buses and passersby who thought it was a worthwhile initiative.

We capitalised on our Girls Skills Day taking place on International Women's Day with many female specific sports groups sharing our event on their social media platforms too,

We also thank Henry Box School for the kind loan of the mannequins (now named Bev the Lev and Nev the Lev).



How the funding was allocated

The grant was spent in accordance with our detailed application and subsequent approval to proceed, except where noted below. See table for specific cost details.



Each participant was given a goodie bag with chocolate and a water bottle which were purchased using allocated funding from the grant. Each supplier offered a discounted price which enabled us to purchase spare items if required.

We initially set-aside some of the funds for pitch rental on the day. However, we benefitted from the Council offering this free of charge, allowing us to re-allocate that budget to supporting another part of the plan.

We used a local printing company who provide an agreed discount to the club to produce flyers and posters which were placed on lampposts and fences around the town (and were dutifully removed afterwards).

The coaches (or experts) provided their support for free which again allowed us to re-allocate funding.

It was important for us as a club to celebrate opportunities for females and we were overjoyed to have a local catering company run by a young female entrepreneur join us for the day. Part of the funding included the hire of the catering van and using tokens the girls were able to get a free drink and pastries. The doughnuts were especially popular.

The table shows approximate values rounded up or down by a few pence. The additional cost of £28 was paid for using the club's contingency budget.

Requirement	Allocated Budget	Actual Cost
Facility Hire (pitch rental)	£100	£0
Promotion (flyers and posters)	£150	£63
Experts	£200	£0
Refreshments	£300	£280
Development Packs and Prizes	£250	£685
Total	£1000	£1028

Review of the day

Rugby League benefits from players of all shapes and sizes. By encouraging young players (especially girls) to be who they are and how they are; we can increase the number of female players enjoying more regular team activities.

The Girls Rugby League Activity Day was also to serve as a recruitment event for the club. However, the club acknowledged some participants may not wish to join the team; and ensured all were treated with equal respect and provided with the same support, regardless of their choices. However, the club has welcomed many female players as a direct result of the event.



The pictures show just some of the activities on the day.



Many of the girls hadn't even picked up a rugby ball before or considered playing a contact sport before.

With any event like this it is important to advise your governing body of your intentions. Part of this was to confirm our insurance would cover any eventualities (which it does) and to ask them to help promote the event. The Rugby Football League not only promoted it for us, but they also sent us free balls with girls branding.

It was lovely to see so many parents stay with us for the whole event, cheering on the players, asking questions about a sport they had not seen before; and having the occasional coffee and pastry (not free for grown-ups).

Further outcomes

Following our inaugural Girls Skills Day we joined the RFL (Rugby Football League) Southern Girls Futures Festival Programme. This gave our new players opportunities to play against other girls' teams who are at a similar or slightly more advanced level in their development. The fixtures included facing teams such as Elmbridge Eagles, Golden Ferns Bristol, South Wales Jets and Aber Valley Wolves; the latter two opponents providing the club's first ever international competitions.

As you can see from the collage, they enjoyed every minute of the day and were able to share/learn skills with girls from other teams. They received much praise from the other teams' coaches and parents and kept asking when the next match is.

Next steps

We're not stopping there....

We hope by signing up to the Southern Girls Futures Festival Programme we will be able to switch to the Southern Girls Futures League. This will allow for regular home and away matches with other teams in our area (in addition to those forementioned clubs). This should also provide additional funding which can be used for travel to games and to cover pitch rental for home matches.

Funding and support from local organisations such as councils, schools and all our amazing sponsors; are vital in underpinning our aims and values. Recognition of our efforts is invaluable for a club made up of volunteers giving support in their spare time.

We would once again like to thank Witney Town Council for their support in our endeavours and look forward to building on our relationship in the future.



Appendix:

West Oxfordshire Levellers RL Girls Rugby League Skills Day Schedule

Sunday 8th March 2026 10am – 1pm

1. Warm-Up Activities (25 mins) *A fun start to get everyone moving, laughing, and ready to learn/play.*

Pulse Raiser Station 1 (depending on numbers)

- Touch Chaos Grid – Practice evasion and awareness while avoiding taggers!

Pulse Raiser Station 2 (depending on numbers)

- Treasure Hunt – Flip cones and compete to score for your team!

Whole Group

- Dynamic Stretching – Prepare muscles safely with movement-based stretches.

2. Skill Stations (30 mins) *Players rotate through stations to learn the core skills of rugby league.*

- Passing Station – Learn to pass backwards accurately and catch safely.
- Footwork Agility – Improve balance and dodging with cones and ladders.
- Support Play – Understand how to help teammates and create space.
- Play the ball – Learn how to play the ball after a tackle is complete.

3. Touch Rugby Games (25 mins) *Fast, fun, non-contact Rugby League to learn movement, teamwork, and passing, including the skills they have worked on above.*

• End Zone Dash – Work together to get the ball safely into the scoring zone – passing in any direction. This game can be the differentiated game for those struggling with their passing backwards whilst moving.

• 3 Tackle Two Handed Touch – Move the ball quickly and try to score before defenders touch you with two hands. Only passing backwards allowed and 3 tackles to score before the ball is handed over. Small-sided games of 4 players per side to enable everyone to be involved.

4. Contact Skills (20 mins) *Safe / controlled drills teaching correct technique before contact games. Those that don't want to get involved in the contact games can go into touch games in section 5 of the plan.*

- Learn the technique – On knees slowly working through the technique of a tackle
- Pad Tackling – Learn how to tackle safely using correct body shape when standing.
- Slow-Speed 1v1 Tackles – Practice real technique in a safe way.
- X-League Tackle Technique – Practice touching the ball as a defender and holding for 2-3 seconds

5. Fun Games Zone (20 mins) *High-energy games that build fitness and decision-making.*

- Steal the Ball – In two's players sprint on the command 'go', they are aiming to grab the ball and escape back to their starting zone without being tackled. If they manage it, they score a point for their team, if the defender tackles them, they score a point for their team.

- Gladiators Gauntlet Run – Evasion challenge against defenders for those that want to have a go at full contact. Narrow channel and the runner has to get past 3 or 4 defenders stood in a line 5 meters behind one another.

6. Attack & Defence Skills (20 mins) *Introduce core gameplay skills used in Rugby League.*

- Straight Running – Learn to run forward and create space. Look at running through tackle shields and hitting the gaps rather than running at defenders. Running at speed to break the defensive line.
- Defensive Line – Move up together and stay connected as a team. Defensive fitness and communication drill, one player runs out 5 meters then back. They then link arms with the second person who goes up together and back before linking up with a third person. Once the whole team is in, moving up in a defensive line, they then drop out one by one. This can be done in teams as a race against each other.
- 3v2 Waves – Practice passing options and decision-making under pressure. Drawing out a defender to create space, dummy, face pass etc.

7. Festival Match (25 mins) *Mini matches full of teamwork and fun! (depending on numbers)*

- Small-Sided Games – Everyone gets more touches and more chances to score.
- Bonus Points – Earn points for teamwork, passing, and good spirit!

8. Cool Down & Celebration (10 mins) *End the camp with stretches and celebrations.*

- Gentle Jog to bring heart rate back down
- Relaxed Stretching – Help muscles recover and stay healthy.
- Celebration & Photos* – Promote club training every Wednesday at WGS

**Consent sought from parents/guardian prior to event. If consent is not provided, photography will be managed to not include those who declined.*

POLICY, GOVERNANCE & FINANCE COMMITTEE



Agenda Item: Community Governance Review

Meeting Date: Monday, 28th September 2026

Contact Officer: Deputy Town Clerk

The purpose of this report is to update councillors on the progress of a Community Governance Review incorporating Witney's boundaries.

Background

The Town Council last considered a Community Governance Review (CGR) for Witney between November 2025 and February 2026. At the request of the Community Governance Review Working Party, a second formal request was made to West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) for a review to be undertaken.

At its meeting on 16 February 2026, Full Council considered WODC's response, which advised that a district-wide CGR would be considered following a decision on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), which was expected in the summer.

In response, the Town Council resolved to continue to press for a CGR to be undertaken as soon as possible following the Government's announcement. (Minute No. 108 refers).

Current Situation

A decision on LGR for Oxfordshire was announced by the Government on 16 July 2026. The decision proposed the creation of three new unitary authorities, including a 'Northern Oxfordshire Council' covering West Oxfordshire and most of the existing Cherwell District.

However, on 7 September 2026, the Government announced that it would review its LGR decisions across England, resulting in the process for Oxfordshire being paused. The outcome and timescale of the review are currently awaited.

At its meeting on 16 September 2026, West Oxfordshire District Council considered the implications of the LGR review and supported a review of town and parish council boundaries, with the aim of strengthening local representation. The Council made the following statement:

The first stage will invite Carterton, Chipping Norton, and Witney town councils, together with neighbouring parish councils and parish meetings, to put forward proposals. Options will then be developed with input from local councillors before returning to Full Council for consideration.

Public consultation will then be undertaken on the proposals, giving residents and other interested organisations an opportunity to comment before final recommendations are prepared.

The review will also consider any resulting implications for town council wards and the number of councillors on affected town and parish councils. It is focused on the three town areas and their neighbouring parishes, rather than a district-wide review.

The decision starts the review process; it does not approve any changes to boundaries. Depending on the timing of local government reorganisation, final decisions may be taken by West Oxfordshire District Council or a successor unitary council

The indicative timetable anticipates final recommendations being considered by March 2028. These timings remain subject to the review process, subsequent decisions, and arrangements for local government reorganisation.

The District Council report may be seen here [CGR Report Council Sept 2026.pdf](#)

The Town Council has already undertaken considerable work in developing its case studies and has previously engaged with neighbouring town and parish councils on this matter.

However, given that approximately a year has now passed, it would be prudent to review and update the existing case studies and any relevant information in preparation for further discussions with West Oxfordshire District Council.

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** – The Community Governance Review provides an opportunity to ensure that future governance arrangements are inclusive and accessible to all residents, with consideration given to the needs and representation of different groups and communities within and around Witney. Engagement should be designed to enable all affected residents to participate, including those who may face barriers to accessing or responding to the review.
- b) **Biodiversity** – Any changes to boundaries should have regard to local environmental interests and could provide opportunities for stronger community engagement in the protection and enhancement of local green spaces and biodiversity.

- c) **Crime & Disorder** – Effective community engagement and representation may support stronger local partnership working and ensure that community safety concerns are identified and reflected in future local governance arrangements.
- d) **Environment & Climate Emergency** – The review may provide opportunities to strengthen community engagement on environmental protection, climate action, and the management of local green spaces.

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.

Failure to prepare adequately for a Community Governance Review could limit the Town Council's ability to provide timely, evidence-based representations and effectively protect local interests.

The main risks are reduced influence over proposed governance changes, insufficient evidence to support the Council's position, and potential reputational concerns. Early preparation and clear engagement arrangements would help mitigate these risks.

Social Value

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

The review provides an opportunity to strengthen local identity, representation, and communities by ensuring that future governance arrangements reflect the needs and interests of residents across the wider Witney area.

Engagement with residents and communities in areas the Town Council would like included within the Witney boundary would help ensure their views, needs and local connections are properly understood and considered as part of the review.

Financial implications

- There are no direct financial implications pertaining to this report.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and:

1. Welcome and acknowledge the decision taken by West Oxfordshire District Council in relation to a Community Governance Review for Witney.
2. Convene a meeting of the Community Governance Review Working Party during October/November to review Case Studies and any further work required as part of this project.
3. Consider delegation on the CGR to the above Working Party to progress and report to this Committee/Council as and when appropriate.

POLICY, GOVERNANCE & FINANCE



Agenda Item: NALC Local Council Award Scheme – Gold Award

Meeting Date: Monday, 28 September 2026

Contact Officer: Deputy Town Clerk

The purpose of this report is to update on the Council's aspiration to apply for gold accreditation under the NALC Local Council Award Scheme.

Background

The National Association of Local Councils (NALC) Award Scheme provides Councils with the opportunity to demonstrate that they meet or exceed sector-defined standards, while also establishing a framework for ongoing improvement in governance, transparency, and best practice.

The scheme comprises three award levels: Bronze, Silver, and Gold. At its meeting held on 9 December 2024 (Minute No. 709), the Council resolved that it met the criteria required to apply for the Bronze Award, which was subsequently achieved in March 2025. The Council's aspiration was to progress to the Silver Award within 12 months, with the aim of achieving Gold by the end of the current Council term in 2027. The silver award was attained in March 2026.

The Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC) describes the Gold Award as follows:

"The Gold Award demonstrates that a council is at the forefront of best practice and achieves excellence in governance, community leadership and council development."

To secure the Gold Award, a council not only fulfils all the requisites of the Bronze and Silver Awards but also provides additional evidence and statements showcasing exemplary governance, effective community engagement, and notable council improvement initiatives.

Current Situation

Gold Award

To achieve the Gold award the council must publish on its website:

Governance	
A business plan covering a financial forecast for at least three years linked to revenue and capital plans for the council and its community.	<i>A business plan covering a financial forecast for at least three years linked to revenue and capital plans for the council and its community.</i>

	<i>The Council has adopted a Corporate Strategy 2025-2029 and officers are enhancing the medium-term financial strategy.</i> <i>The Council will also soon be presented with an Infrastructure Funding Statement, informed by Committee, Resident's Survey comments, and Officer forward-planning.</i>
Community	
An annual report, online material, news bulletins, and other council communications with evidence of: - Engaging with diverse groups in the community using a variety of methods - Community engagement influencing council activity and priorities - A wide range of council activities, including innovative projects, that produce positive outcomes for the community - Co-operating constructively with other organisations - Active promotion of elections, including that at least two-thirds of its councillors stood for election	<i>The Council has produced an Annual Report since 2025 and has an active news section, social media platforms and issues a weekly round-up to the local press. In addition, there are three further newsletters issued online throughout the year in addition to one posted to every household in March.</i> <i>The Council has accessibility and language translation tools available on its Website and a Community Voices Group which it hopes to reinstate soon. Interpretation boards at play areas.</i> <i>The Council engages with the Community through various outlets, events and via Stakeholder, partnership, and organisation meetings.</i> <i>The Council undertakes a range of activities, all with the aim of producing positive outcomes – investing in facilities, sport and recreation areas, innovative projects such as St George's Day, The Station Detached Youth etc.</i>

The following criteria require statements (of no more than one page) that should be presented to the accreditation panel showing how the council:

Governance	
Ensures that the council delivers value for money	<i>The statement on ensuring value for money explains how the council reviews the quality and costs of its activities to confirm that the costs are appropriate. It may also include reference to criteria from the other award levels as a number of these criteria do provide evidence that the council offers value for money. The statement will describe to the panel how the council understands and upholds its responsibilities over use of public money and showing due care and appropriate processes have been followed. The panel will look for evidence of sound financial management and transparency, including that the council has had two consecutive years of unqualified audits and it would be desirable if the council published its internal audit report on its website alongside the AGAR each year.</i>
Community	
Provides leadership in planning for the future of the community	<i>The statement on leadership in planning for the future shows how the council engages with a range of activities that influence the planning system and facilitate community led planning. Activities may include, for example, identifying and representing community views on planning applications and local plans, working on parish or town plans, or holding community-led planning activities such as Planning for Real® or community</i>

	<i>conferences. The statement should include the council's approach to neighbourhood planning.</i>
Engages with the community on issues related to the environment and climate change	<i>The panel seeks evidence in this statement that the council has considered climate change and other environmental issues and has engaged with the community on these issues. The council will have considered how it can support or facilitate the community to take actions that could have a positive environmental impact for the local area, or more widely.</i>
Development	
Manages the performance of staff and the council as a corporate body to achieve its business plan	<i>The statement on performance management explains the processes by which the performance of the council as a corporate body is constantly improved and shows how the performance, skills, and knowledge of each individual in the council is managed to help the council achieve its objectives on behalf of the community. The statement also includes confirming that each member of staff has their own professional development plan and that the majority of councillors participate in a member development programme that is specific to their roles and the needs of the council. It is important to show evidence that the council is a good employer.</i>
Supports a culture of civility and respect in the council	<i>The statement will provide the panel with a variety of ways in which the council actively supports a culture of civility and respect. This might include information from council meetings where commitment has been made to civil and respectful debate. It might include council policies, training for staff and councillors related to code of conduct, NOLAN principles, and other relevant topics. The council might include information of where conflict in the council has been successfully managed and resolved. The statement might include supporting comments from staff, councillors, other partners.</i>

The deadline for the next round of applications is 4 January 2027, and officers are confident everything will be in place to resolve the necessary items to submit an application at the Full Council meeting on 7 December 2026.

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 – accreditation affirms the Council’s commitment to ensuring equality in Council services.
- b) Biodiversity – accreditation affirms the Council’s commitment to ensuring consideration of biodiversity in providing Council services.
- c) Crime & Disorder – accreditation affirms the Council’s commitment to ensuring consideration of crime and disorder Council services.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – no direct impact from the contents of this 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.

Attaining the NALC award(s) demonstrates the Council’s compliance with statutory governance and transparency requirements. It provides a structured framework to initiate and plan the initial stages of improvement, showing increased performance and confidence. Establishing policies for continuous development becomes a key outcome, aiding the Council in pursuit of excellence.

Social Value

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

There is no direct positive change from the contents of this report, but the accreditation of the awards enshrines community engagement and will ensure services are delivered which will improve the lives of residents.

Financial implications

- The cost of applying for registration is £50
- The Gold Award accreditation fee for the Local Council Award Scheme is £160.00 (reduced as the silver award was received in the last 12 months).
- The cost can be funded from budget line 4024/702 – Democratic Representation & Management Subscriptions.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report.

POLICY, GOVERNANCE & FINANCE COMMITTEE



Agenda Item: Financial Matters referred from Spending Committees

Meeting Date: Monday, 28 September 2026

Contact Officer: Deputy Town Clerk

Background

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

This report provides a summary of all spending committee decisions, both approved and declined, to ensure comprehensive and transparent scrutiny by this Committee which holds overall responsibility for the Council's financial management and oversight of budgetary decisions.

Current Situation

Parks & Recreation Committee – 7 September

There were no recommendations for the current fiscal year but the following for 2027/28 budget-setting:

Splash Park – That, a budget for Splash Park maintenance and future replacement be maintained.

Raleigh Crescent – That, the provision of picnic benches at Raleigh Crescent be included in the budget.

Climate & Biodiversity Committee – 8 September

Tree Budget – That, an increase to the arboriculture budget be considered as trees had been lost during the hot summer.

Climate– That, an initial £50,000 for climate initiatives be included in the budget as the current budget is likely to be utilised during the next six months.

It was agreed both items should be refined in time for November.

Halls Cemeteries & Allotments Committee – 14 September 2026

Hearing Loops – That, assistive listening be installed in the Main Hall and Gallery Room for the sum of £11,378.33 (£6,000 agreed budget and £6,000 from General Reserve). *Burwell Hall*

will be a separate project. Hearing loops for the Administration office and Corn Exchange Café had been purchased for the sum of £431.98.

Male Sanitary Bins – That, Members noted the inclusion of male sanitary bins in the Corn Exchange toilets, within agreed operational budgets.

There were no further recommendations for the current fiscal year but the following for 2027/28 budget-setting.

Property Maintenance – That, a £50,000 property maintenance budget is retained to ensure carbon reduction programme continues.

Property Maintenance – That, funds should be set aside (no amount set) for kitchen improvements at the Corn Exchange and also Burwell Hall improvements – it was acknowledged there was no capacity to do now but funds should be earmarked for the future.

Stronger Communities Committee – 21 September 2026

Podcasting – That, no expenditure be incurred in progressing podcasting for the Council at this time.

Website Accessibility – That, no expenditure be incurred in employing an external contractor to advise on accessibility and that this should remain an in-house function.

Litter & Dog Waste Bins – That, no expenditure be incurred in relation to requests for new bins on town council-owned land.

Youth Council (A Slice of Politics) – That, Business 1 be agreed as the supplier for refreshments for the event, being the best value to the Council for the sum of £75.

Winter Preparations – That, the installation of two salt bins be recommended for approval at South Lawn and Burwell Meadow for the sum of £600 for both.

There were no further recommendations for the current fiscal year but the following for 2027/28 budget-setting

Noticeboards at Play Areas – That, £1,500 be included in the budget for the purchase of three noticeboards as indicated in the final option presented in the report.

Big Lunch 2027 – That, a budget of £1,000 be included in the budget for an additional Play Day to mark this occasion in June.

RAF Freedom Parade 2027 – That, a budget of £750 be included in the budget for facilitating and providing refreshments for the occasion (50th Anniversary of the Freedom of Witney and 90th Anniversary of the base).

Youth Services Grant – That, a budget of £20,000 be retained for this scheme in the budget.

Home Start Oxford – That, a budget of £12,000 be retained for early years support in the budget.

The Station Detached Youth – That, a budget of £29,250 (dependent on inflation) be recommended for inclusion in the budget.

In Bloom – That, a budget of £4,200 be recommended for approval (£2,200 of this being allocated to work in Unterhaching Park). Also, that 2027 vouchers be agreed for the following amounts: Schools In Bloom - £40, Community Gardening - £75.

Third Party Events – That, subsidised use of The Leys for Witney Carnival and Witney Pride be recommended for approval and that £1,000 for the existing annual Play Day be retained for the budget.

Impact Assessments

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

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

Risk

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

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

Social Value

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

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

Financial implications

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

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and,

1. Consider the recommendations of the spending committees as detailed above.

POLICY, GOVERNANCE & FINANCE COMMITTEE



Agenda Item:	Grants & Subsidised Lettings
Meeting Date:	Monday, 28 September 2026
Contact Officer:	Deputy Town Clerk/R.F.O

The purpose of this report is to present the Committee with grant requests from local organisations so they may agree dispersal.

Background

The Council maintains budgets for general discretionary grants and subsidised letting grants for groups or organisations which require financial assistance towards projects, costs and venue hire in order to provide services for the residents of Witney.

Grant requests are usually considered by this Committee bi-annually at meetings in June and January, however there is occasion when they need to be considered at other times of the year due to Council Committee timeframes. No requests were received for consideration at the June meeting, and the Council therefore focused on the allocation of the Youth Services Grant.

In the current year the budgets are as follows:

- Discretionary Grants (4100/407) - £20,000
- Subsidised Lettings – Corn Exchange/Burwell Hall (4110/407) - £2,000
- Subsidised Lettings – The Leys/Other (4110/202) - £5,980
- Annual grants - There are also specific budgets for a number of annual grants to organisations. For this meeting, they are covered in a separate report.

Current Situation

Subsidised Letting Applications

The Council's subsidised letting policy can be viewed here [SubsidisedLettingPolicy2025.pdf](#)

1. Oxfordshire Community & Voluntary Action (OCVA)

An application has been received for the cost of Corn Exchange Hall hire on 15 October 2026 (**£147**) for a Funding Surgery aimed at charities, community groups and voluntary organisations in the west of the county. The full application and supporting documents are attached under **Appendix A**.

2. Burwell Seniors Christmas Party

A request has been received for the cost of Burwell Hall hire on 18 December 2026 for the annual Burwell Senior's Christmas Party (**£116**). *The Council has supported this event in previous years.* An application is attached as **Appendix M**.

3. The Station - Detached Youth

At the Council meeting held on 13 July, it was agreed the Council would provide subsidised (free) letting for six parenting course sessions at the Corn Exchange in September. A grant form is attached for information as **Appendix B**, the total hire cost being **£441** (6 sessions @ £73.50). It is understood the group have enquired about the possibility of subsidised hire for a further six sessions.

4. West Witney Sports & Social Club

The Club will hold its Annual General Meeting (AGM) at Burwell Hall on 6 November 2026. Following a meeting held jointly by the Club and the Town Council in August, it was been agreed that the **£129** hire fee for the meeting would be offered at a subsidised rate. This reflects the fact that the facilities at the Clubhouse are not yet complete and that the AGM is expected to support the Club's future progress.

5. West Oxfordshire Performing Arts Foundation

At the meeting of this Committee on 2 February 2026, the Committee recommended approval of a subsidised let for two days for the above organisation to hold an inaugural Festival of Speech at the Corn Exchange.

The event is booked for 21-22 November 2026 and the amount for this hire equals **£1,698**.

Discretionary Grants

The Council's grant policy can be viewed here [GrantAidPolicy202526.pdf](#)

1. Cotswold Rivers Trust

A grant application has been received asking for **£740** to undertake targeted chemical analysis of the watercourse [Colwell Brook]. This will provide the essential evidence base required to:

- identify key contaminants of concern
- inform appropriate restoration and management interventions
- support future funding applications and partnership work

'This represents a small but critical investment that will directly enable evidence-led restoration planning and help move the project from long-standing community concern to practical action.' The full application and supporting documents are attached under **Appendix C**.

2. Ducklington Sports Club

A grant application has been received asking for **£2,000** to fund the purchase of new training and match footballs and first aid kits for all 14 teams ahead of the 2026/27 season. The full application and supporting documents are attached under **Appendix D**.

3. Witney Mills Cricket Club

A grant application has been received asking for **£1,700** to purchase a new mobile batting cage. The full application and supporting documents are attached under **Appendix E**.

4. Witney Congregational Church

A grant application has been received asking for **£3,000** 'To transform an area of the walled garden into a Tranquillity & Sensory Garden'. This aims to have level access to cater for all disabilities and will be available to any/all at times when the building is open. (9/5 weekdays – 9/1 weekends).' The full application and supporting documents are attached under **Appendix F**.

5. Little Oak Preschool

A grant application has been received asking for **£1,150** towards replacing kitchen appliances that have broken and add a washer dryer to clean flannels and soft toys etc. The full application and supporting documents are attached under **Appendix G**.

6. Parent SENse Witney

A grant application has been received asking for **£866** towards the first year of free, parent-led peer-support meetings and information sessions to parents and carers of children with SEND. The full application and supporting documents are attached under **Appendix H**.

7. Clean Slate

A grant application has been received asking for **£500** to provide subsidised counselling sessions for adults experiencing mental health and emotional wellbeing challenges. The full application and supporting documents are attached under **Appendix J**.

8. Sounds of Support

A grant application has been received asking for **£200** towards an annual community live-music event in Witney which brings local people together while raising awareness of mental health and male suicide prevention and raising funds for Tough To Talk. The full application and supporting is attached under **Appendix K**.

Other Grants

1. Witney Music Festival (WMF)

In accordance with the Council's internal processes, grant funding is reviewed and monitored annually to assess delivery, outcomes, and the use of Council funds.

The Memorandum of Understanding Partnership Agreement between WMF and the Town Council, together with a report provided by the event organisers, is attached under **Appendix L** for Members' consideration.

At the Council meeting held on 8 December 2025, representations were received from members of the public regarding the Council's financial contribution towards the event, the cost of tickets and the value and outcomes arising from the Council's funding. Comments were also raised as to whether other community groups had an opportunity to host a community festival with a similar level of Town Council funding.

Members recognised the importance of retaining a music festival as a community event, while also identifying the need for greater scrutiny of financial performance, including income, expenditure, profit, and any losses incurred. Consideration to stating that no additional funding would be provided in the event of a loss beyond the annual £10,000 contribution was discussed. As with some other organisations receiving Council funding, it was also suggested that a Council Member could act as a representative in relation to WMF.

A report for the Council on the 2026 event is anticipated to be tabled ahead of the meeting. Members are asked to consider the documentation and make any recommendations considered appropriate to inform the Council's budget-setting process for 2027–28 with regards to subsidised letting and the annual partnership grant towards the event.

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 pillars of the plan:

2. An Engaged and Supported Community
3. An Empowered Community
4. A Respectful 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** – Providing grants to local groups and organisations may have a positive impact on equality by supporting inclusive activities and services for people from diverse backgrounds, including those with protected characteristics.

- b) **Biodiversity** – the application concerning Colwell Brook will help mitigate against damage to the local eco-system and habitats.
- c) **Crime & Disorder** - no direct impact from the contents of the report although support for disadvantaged young people may lead to fulfilling lives.
- d) **Environment & Climate Emergency** – the application concerning Colwell Brook will help towards maintaining that environmental area.

Risk

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

The Council has policies and criteria for which it uses to award its grants to ensure public funds are allocated and used appropriately. If awards are deviated from these criteria, a robust reason should be given and agreed by the Committee.

The Council must ensure they are satisfied with the information provided in order to award funds and request further information if not. To not do so could incur reputational risk.

Social Value

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

Providing funds for community events strengthens community cohesion, reduces isolation, supports wellbeing, and encourages connections, helping build a more inclusive and resilient community.

Financial implications

- At the Annual Council Meeting held on 17 May 2023, the Council invoked the General Power of Competence under which the ability to award these grants is made.
- The total value of the requests in relation to discretionary grants totals £10,156. The current balance of the discretionary grants budget (4100/407) is £20,000. Note that there is also an earmarked reserve which includes a sum of £11,252 in relation to grants, available if there are special circumstances or to provide for grants for which the remaining budget in any financial year cannot meet and which it considers needs to be provided.
- The total value of the requests in relation to Halls subsidised lettings totals £833 (£570 of which is for noting). The current balance of the Halls subsidised hire budget (4110/407), including sums committed for hirings later in the financial year is £1,289.
- Youth Services Grant 2026-27 (4169/408) – There is a ringfenced budget of £3,500 for youth projects/services within this financial year.
- In 2026-27 the Council provided WMF with grant funding of £10,000 and provided subsidised letting at the Leys to the value of £3,244.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and;

1. Consider the subsidised letting requests as presented, and award as agreed.
2. Note the subsidised hire for the initial six parenting course sessions by The Station, a meeting of West Witney Sports and Social Club, and for West Oxon Performing Arts Foundation.
3. Consider whether to support further subsidised hire funding for the next six session parenting course sessions.
4. Consider the discretionary grant requests as presented, and award as agreed.
5. Consider the Partnership Agreement with Witney Music Festival and resolve accordingly as to whether further review is required and/or budget for the event in 2027-28.

Document is Restricted



WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

Grant-aid to Local Organisations APPLICATION FORM

(PLEASE COMPLETE THE FORM IN BLOCK CAPITALS)

(1) Your Organisation			
Name of Organisation		Burwell Community group	
Registered Address*		Home address	
Post Code		Tel No.	
Contact Name	Rachel Crouch		
Position in Organisation	Volunteer (i.e. Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary)		
Registered Charity	/NO	Registration No.	
<i>What are the activities and/or aims of the organisation:</i> <i>A Xmas lunch for up to 75 residents (over 60s) from Burwell estate</i>			
(2) Membership			
How many members do you have?		6 volunteers	
Approximately how many of your members live in Witney?		6 volunteers	
Is membership restricted in any way?		Residents of Burwell Estate	
What is your annual subscription, if any?		N/A	
Are you affiliated to a national organisation? If so, which one?		No	
Local venue/meeting place		A home on Burwell Drive	

(3) Grants	
Purpose for which the grant is required: Hire of the Burwell Hall	
Amount of grant applied for	5 hour hire for the use of the hall
Has your organisation previously applied to the Town Council for a grant?	YES
If YES please give details	Previous hire of the hall
Have you applied for a grant to any other body or organisation?	NO
If YES please give details	
(4) Financial	
<i>Please enclose a copy of your latest audited accounts, a financial projection for the period following the balance sheet or a Business Plan if a new organisation. N/A</i>	
(5) Fundraising	
What fundraising events or activities will your organisation be holding this year?	
None as all paid for by volunteers for food etc	
(6) General	
Recipients of a grant from the Town Council should acknowledge the fact on all relevant literature.	
Please provide or attach any additional information which may assist the Council in reaching its decision.	
<i>I certify that the above information is true to the best of my knowledge and belief, and that I am authorised to make this application for Grant-aid.</i>	
Signed: R Crouch	Date:21/09/2026

Please return your completed application form to the address overleaf, for the attention of the TOWN CLERK

For office use only:			
Acknowledged		Previously Applied	
Grant Aid Awarded/Amount	Y / N	Chq No.	

POLICY, GOVERNANCE & FINANCE COMMITTEE



Agenda Item: IT Provision

Meeting Date: Monday, 28 September 2026

Contact Officer: Deputy Town Clerk

The purpose of this report is to update Members on the Council's current IT provision and seek approval for an extension to the existing IT contract, together with further IT and cyber security enhancements to help inform the 2027–28 budget-setting process.

Background

Following a review of service provision, the Council sought a one-year IT contract for 2025, as referenced in Minute F200 of the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee meeting held on 14 April 2025. Following consideration by the Committee on 21 July 2025 (Minute F435 refers), the Council subsequently entered into a one-year contract with its current provider.

The one-year term was intended to provide the Council with flexibility to assess the quality of service during the contract period and to inform its decision-making regarding future arrangements.

During the contract period, several Council services and systems have been enhanced. These include improvements to IT security, migration to a secure cloud server, the introduction of multi-factor authentication and the adoption of updated technology. These measures have supported greater flexibility and agility for the Council's workforce and improved access to software and systems.

Current Situation

The Council's IT infrastructure remains a critical resource supporting service delivery and day-to-day operations. While significant progress has been made in modernising systems, several projects remain underway and further improvements are planned.

Cyber security remains one of the Council's most significant operational risks, with the potential to disrupt services and compromise data. The Council's IT provider has recommended enhancements to improve resilience and security. Whilst these proposals involve significant expenditure, officers consider it important that the costs are weighed against the risks being mitigated and the protection provided to Council services and operations.

1. IT Service Contract Annual Renewal

To ensure continuity and support the completion of projects, officers are seeking an extension to the current IT support contract. Details are included in the confidential appendix.

2. Cyber Essentials Certification

Cyber Essentials is a UK government backed scheme designed to help organisations protect themselves against common cyber threats. It provides a clear set of security controls to safeguard sensitive data and maintain customer trust.

Achieving Cyber Essentials certification demonstrates the Council's commitment to maintaining appropriate standards of cyber security and strengthening its protection against common cyber threats. Subject to eligibility and opting into the scheme, certification also provides access to cyber liability insurance of up to £25,000, together with a 24-hour incident response service providing access to technical, legal and crisis-management support in the event of a cyber incident.

An option, including associated costs, has been provided by the Council's IT supplier and is set out in the confidential appendix for consideration.

3. Cyber Security Packages

Cyber security remains one of the Council's most significant risks. The proposed enhancements are intended to provide a proactive and ongoing defence across the Council's operations, helping to protect systems, data, officers and Councillors from evolving cyber threats.

The Council's IT provider has presented three options, together with the associated costs, which are set out in the confidential appendix for Members' consideration.

4. Councillor Tablets

In line with previous practice, it is proposed that provision is made within the 2027-28 budget for replacement tablets for Councillors from May 2027. Maintaining appropriate and up-to-date equipment supports secure access to Council systems. This is particularly relevant to the Council's wider information governance and security responsibilities, including the use of gov.uk domain email addresses and the maintenance of current and robust IT policies.

Two options, including associated costs, have been provided by the Council's IT supplier and are set out in the confidential appendix for consideration.

Online Bookings Software

In addition, the Council will shortly be able to introduce an online booking portal, previously approved by the Council, through its website(s). The portal will provide existing and prospective customers with a more convenient and accessible booking service, available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Committee & Meeting Software

The Council's current committee and meeting software has been in place since 2019 and has been used throughout two Council administrations. While the software provided a range of new functionality when initially introduced, alternative solutions are now available, including options that may offer different functionality and cost structures. Officers consider that this provides an appropriate opportunity to review the current contract ahead of the new administration taking office in May 2027.

A survey will be undertaken to establish which functions of the service are currently used by Councillors and to inform the assessment of the Council's requirements. Further commercial information relating to the software options and current contract is provided in the confidential appendix.

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** – Enhanced cyber security and the introduction of an online booking portal are expected to have a positive equality impact by improving the security, resilience and accessibility of Council services. The online portal will provide a more convenient way for residents to access services, while alternative access methods will remain available to support those who are unable or prefer not to use digital services.
- b) **Biodiversity** – No impact from the contents of this report.
- c) **Crime & Disorder** – No impact from the contents of this report.
- d) **Environment & Climate Emergency** – The proposed enhancements to the Council's IT infrastructure, including the introduction of an online booking portal and new Councillor tablets are expected to have a positive environmental impact by reducing reliance on paper, supporting digital service delivery, and reducing the need for unnecessary travel to Council offices. Where new tablets are purchased, existing devices will be securely wiped and either recycled in accordance with appropriate disposal practices or repurposed for use by local community groups, helping to reduce electronic waste.

Risk

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

The Council's current IT arrangements present several operational and information security risks that should be considered as part of its business continuity planning. While cloud-based

services offer significant benefits, they also introduce dependencies that require appropriate resilience and contingency measures. Maintaining effective cyber security controls is important in reducing exposure to cyber threats, while the continued use of older or unsupported equipment may increase operational and security risks.

The proposed IT solutions represent a significant financial commitment and should therefore be assessed against the level of risk they are intended to mitigate. Any investment should be proportionate, support service resilience and business continuity, and demonstrate value for money for the Council.

Social Value

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

Providing an online booking portal offers social value by improving accessibility and convenience for residents, enabling services and facilities to be booked at any time without the need to contact Council staff directly. This can enhance customer experience, and support more efficient service delivery.

Investment in enhanced cyber security also delivers social value by helping to protect residents' personal data, maintain public trust, and ensure the continued resilience of Council services against evolving cyber threats.

Financial implications

- The Council does not need to tender for a new IT contract under Item 5.7 (iv) of the Council's adopted Financial Regulations as it is an extension to the current contract.
- The Council holds an IT Earmarked reserve (EMR 383) which has a current balance of £24,575 from where projects one-off costs may be funded from, if agreed.
 - Councillor Tablets
 - Cyber Essentials Certification
 - Meetings Software
- Approval of additional monthly costs for security enhancements would need to be included in the 2027-28 budget and beyond.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and,

1. Approve the extension to the current IT provision and services contract with Atomyc Ltd.
2. Consider whether the Council should seek Cyber Essentials certification.
3. Consider the inclusion of a pre-wrapped Security solution for the Council (including officers and Councillors).
4. Consider the allocation of funds in 2027-28 for the purchase and support of new Councillor tablets.

5. Note the updates concerning the Council's Online Bookings and Meetings Management software. NB. A recommendation on future software provision is expected to be presented to Members during the November cycle of meetings. Alternatively, Members may wish to delegate authority to officers to continue evaluating and, where appropriate, progress discussions with potential providers.

Document is Restricted

Document is Restricted