MEETING OF THE
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Monday, 12 October 2026

At 7.02 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney

Present:
Councillor J Doughty (Chair)

Councillors:	A Bailey	R Crouch
	O Collins	G Doughty
	G Meadows	D Edwards-Hughes
	J Aitman	D Newcombe
	T Ashby	J Robertshaw
	D Enright	S Simpson
	R Smith	J Treloar
	A Mubin	
Officers:	Sharon Groth	Town Clerk
	Adam Clapton	Deputy Town Clerk
	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
	Nigel Warner	Responsible Financial Officer
Others:	Four members of the public.	

501 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies for absence were received.

502 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillors R Crouch and G Meadows declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 10 as they sat as council appointed trustees on the Witney Town Charity.

Later in the meeting at Agenda item 14 Cllr D Enright declared that he undertook work with The Community Communication Partnership (CCP). In this role Councillor Enright noted that he did not undertake any work in Oxfordshire, however he would not take any part and left the room for the entirety of the agenda item.

There were no other declarations from Members.

503 **MINUTES**

That, the minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2026 were received.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2026 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

504 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

The Committee adjourned for this item.

The committee received representation from the Chair of Witney Town Charity regarding the Charity's activities, governance arrangements and proposals to transition to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). Representatives highlighted recent projects including support for the Aspire Youth Hub, improvements to the Almshouses gardens and ongoing programmes to upgrade and modernise the Charity's housing stock.

Members heard also about trustee numbers, the trustee's role and the benefits of retaining local knowledge and expertise within the Charity's governance structure. The representee also explained that the proposed changes in agenda item 10 were intended to provide greater flexibility in recruiting trustees with specialist skills whilst maintaining respected links with the Town Council.

The Committee reconvened.

505 **REPRESENTATION ON OUTSIDE BODIES**

With the permission of the Chair, this item was moved forward on the agenda to enable the members of the public present to hear the discussion and outcome.

The Council considered a request from Witney Town Charity seeking support for proposed amendments to its governing document, together with the nomination of a replacement trustee.

Members discussed the proposed constitutional changes and the future relationship between the Town Council and the Charity. Councillor D Edwards Hughes, seconded by Councillor S Simpson, proposed that the Council support the amended constitutional wording as proposed by the Charity's trustees, including provision for the Council to nominate 'up to six trustees.' An alternative proposal was moved by Councillor R Smith and seconded by Councillor O Collins that the Council should retain the right to nominate all six trustees rather than up to six trustees.

Upon being put to the vote, the proposal moved by Councillor Edwards Hughes was carried by seven votes in favour, six against, with two abstentions. As that motion was carried, the alternative proposal was withdrawn by Cllr Smith.

The Council also considered the nomination of Ms Jill Brooks to fill the town council trustee vacancy arising from the resignation of Mr Barry Beadle from his council nominated position to take up the appointment as Deputy Clerk to the Charity. Members noted the skills and experience that Ms Brooks would bring to the role and which were required. Her appointment was agreed following a vote with the result being fifteen in favour and one abstention.

The Mayor thanked the Charity's representative and fellow trustees for the valuable work undertaken by Witney Town Charity in support of the local community.

Resolved:

1. That, the constitutional wording amendments for Witney Town Council nominated Trustees proposed by Witney Town Charity be supported and;

2. That, Jill Brooks be appointed as a Town Council nominated trustee to Witney Town Charity.

506 **WITNEY COMMUNITY POLICING ISSUES**

The Council noted that no representative of Thames Valley Police had been able to attend despite an invitation being extended.

The Committee Clerk advise he would follow up with the newly appointed Inspector to request attendance at future meetings.

Resolved:

That, the update be noted.

507 **AN UPDATE FROM WITNEY OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCILLORS AND WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCILLORS**

Members received updates from Councillors serving on West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) and Oxfordshire County Council (OCC).

Councillor Crouch (WODC) drew attention to free Mental Health First Aid training being offered to parish, town and district councillors in conjunction with Oxfordshire Mind and encouraged Members to take advantage of the opportunity.

Councillor Enright (WODC) reported that the operating arrangements for the Charter Markets in Witney and Chipping Norton were being reviewed and noted positive feedback from traders and visitors.

Councillor Robertshaw (OCC) advised that Oxfordshire County Council was seeking funding for resurfacing of Witney High Street, referred to proposals concerning future maintenance of the River Windrush and highlighted work relating to support for young carers.

Resolved:

That, the updates be noted.

508 **REPORT BACK FROM THE COUNCILLORS ON THE WORK WITH EXTERNAL BODIES WHERE THEY SERVE AS THE TOWN COUNCIL'S NOMINATED REPRESENTATIVE**

Members received reports from representatives appointed to outside organisations.

Councillor D Enright reported that the **Witney Educational Foundation** was progressing proposals to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation.

Councillor R Crouch advised that **Witney Town Charity** had recently held resident engagement events and that improvements to the Almshouse gardens had been undertaken with support from volunteers and funding provided by a local DIY retailer.

Councillor Crouch also reported on the work of the **Witney Twinning Association**, which was making arrangements to host visitors from both Le Touquet and Unterhaching during a

programme of events scheduled for the weekend of 7 November. Members were advised that a local artist had donated gifts to be presented to the visiting delegations.
Additionally, it was unanimously supported that the Council consider the presentation of a certificate to Herr B Maidment to mark his 25 years of support to the Association.

Councillor R Smith reported that Fairtrade Fortnight had been successfully delivered by the **Witney Fairtrade Action Group**.

Councillor Smith further advised that the **West Witney Sports and Social Club** had arranged its Annual General Meeting for 6 November and was progressing plans to convert to Limited Company status.

Councillor J Robertshaw reported that he had been appointed Treasurer of the **Cogges Welfare Trust** and that the Trust was seeking to further promote its activities within its local community.

Resolved:

1. That, the reports be noted and,
2. That, a 25 year contribution certificate be present to Herr B Maidment.

509 **PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE - 14 JULY, 4 AUGUST, 25 AUGUST, 15 SEPTEMBER & 6 OCTOBER**

The Chair of the Committee presented the above minutes to council and moved their acceptance.

The committee Clerk advised that due to a technical issue the report of the committees' comments to planning application on 6th October were not appended. These would be updated and republished as soon as possible.

Resolved:

1. That, the minutes for the Planning and Development Committee meetings held on 14 July, 4 August, 25 August, 15 September & 6 October be received and any recommendations therein approved and,
2. That, details of the comments for planning applications considered at the 6 October meeting be appended and the minutes republished when available.

510 **PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE - 7 SEPTEMBER**

The Chair of the Committee presented the above minutes to council and moved their acceptance.

P414 – Officers advised that an expression of interest was being explored and an update would be provided at the next meeting of the Committee on 2 November.

Resolved:

That, the minutes for the Park & Recreation Committee meeting held on 7 September be received and any recommendations therein approved.

511 **CLIMATE & BIODIVERSITY COMMITTEE - 8 SEPTEMBER**

The Chair of the Committee presented the above minutes to council and moved their acceptance.

CB429 – A meeting of the Climate Action Working Party (CAWP) was scheduled for 11 November.

Resolved:

1. That, the minutes for the Climate & Biodiversity Committee meeting held on 8 September be received and any recommendations therein approved and,
2. That, the date of the CAWP be circulated to all members.

512 **HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE - 14 SEPTEMBER**

The Chair of the Committee presented the above minutes to council and moved their acceptance.

Resolved:

That, the minutes for the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee meeting held on 14 September be received and any recommendations therein approved.

513 **STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE - 21 SEPTEMBER**

The Vice-Chair of the Committee presented the above minutes to council and moved their acceptance.

Resolved:

That, the minutes for the Stronger Communities Committee meeting held on 21 September be received and any recommendations therein approved.

514 **POLICY, GOVERNANCE & FINANCE COMMITTEE - 28 SEPTEMBER**

The Chair of the Committee presented the above minutes to council and moved their acceptance.

F481 – Officers provided information to clarify the proposal for noticeboards at three of the Councils play areas, these would be to provide specific information about those play locations and were not general notice boards. Following a vote the result of which was fourteen votes in favour one against and one abstention It was agreed that the amount of £1,500 be returned for consideration in the 2027/28 budget.

Resolved:

1. That, the minutes for the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee meeting held on 28 September be received and any recommendations therein approved and,
2. That, the co-opted appointment of Cllr G Doughty to the Community Governance Working Party be noted and,
3. That, three information noticeboards be considered in the 2027/28 Budget.

515 **CONCLUSION OF AUDIT 2025-26**

The Council received the report of the Responsible Financial Officer regarding completion of the external audit.

Members noted that the external auditor, Moore, had not raised any matters affecting its audit certification and opinion and that no significant governance concerns had been identified.

The Responsible Financial Officer responded to comments from the auditor relating to general reserve levels and advised that the Council's reserves remained appropriate for an authority of its size. Members were unanimous in agreement with the Clerk responding to Moore to outline this position.

Members expressed their appreciation to the finance team for their work throughout the audit process.

Resolved:

1. That, the External Auditor's Report and Certificate for 2025/26 be noted and;
2. That, the auditor's correspondence dated 25 September 2026 be noted and;
3. That, authority be delegated to the Town Clerk/Chief Executive to respond to the auditor regarding reserve levels and;
4. That, the publication of the Notice of Conclusion of Audit be noted.

516 **CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY & ACTION PLAN**

The Council considered the report along with the final draft Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan.

Members discussed the document, future funding opportunities, delivery mechanisms and the role of the Climate Action Working Party in developing detailed implementation plans.

Thanks were expressed to Officers for the significant work undertaken so far in the preparation of the Strategy, however, Members looked forward to receiving additional information on the costings of each of the objectives identified.

Agreement to approve the adoption of the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan was reached unanimously.

Resolved:

1. That, the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan be adopted and;
2. That, progress made in relation to carbon reduction projects and funding opportunities be noted.

517 **DEPENDENTS CARERS ALLOWANCE**

The Council considered the report of the Town Clerk/C.E.O. concerning a campaign led by Weymouth Town Council and the National Association of Local Councils seeking legislative change to permit parish and town councils to reimburse dependants' carers' expenses incurred whilst undertaking council duties.

Members noted that similar provisions were already available to members of principal authorities and considered that the proposal could help remove barriers to participation in local government by those with caring responsibilities.

During discussion, Members noted an error within the draft letter supplied by Weymouth Town Council, which referred to the Equality Act 2000 rather than the Equality Act 2010. Concern was also expressed that, as both Weymouth Town Council and the local Member of Parliament were Liberal Democrat led, care should be taken to ensure the matter was not viewed as a political issue. Members agreed that the proposal should be supported on its merits as an issue of accessibility and inclusion rather than party politics.

Members further agreed that, in addition to writing to the local Member of Parliament, the Council should publicise its support for the campaign in order to demonstrate its commitment to widening participation in local democracy.

Resolved:

1. That, the Council support the proposal promoted by Weymouth Town Council and the National Association of Local Councils seeking legislative change to allow parish and town councils to reimburse dependants' carers' expenses and;
2. That, authority be delegated to the Town Clerk to write to the local Member of Parliament in support of the proposal, incorporating any necessary factual or legal amendments to the draft correspondence and;
3. That, the Council publicise its support for the campaign.

518 **FUTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN OXFORDSHIRE**

The council noted the update regarding the pause to the Local Government Review.

Councillor Enright advised that a further announcement from Government ministers was anticipated shortly and undertook to share any relevant information received through attendance at forthcoming Local Government Association discussions.

Resolved:

That, the updates be noted.

519 **WEST OXFORDSHIRE DRAFT LOCAL PLAN 2043**

The Council considered the response to the consultation on the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2043 which had been submitted prior to the deadline of 9 October. The Leader introduced the item and reminded Members that the purpose of the discussion was to agree the Council's submission to the consultation.

Members agreed with the wider consultation response, including the importance of infrastructure delivery, affordable housing provision, active travel links, protection of community assets and ensuring future growth was supported by appropriate services and facilities.

Members considered a number of proposed amendments to the draft response, with particular focus on transport infrastructure, housing delivery and the proposed redevelopment in the town centre, including Woodford Way.

Members discussed references within the draft response to future rail connectivity. Concerns were expressed that reference to only rail infrastructure could be viewed as unrealistic within the plan period. It was unanimously agreed that broader terminology relating to future Mass Rapid Transit connectivity would better reflect the Council's aspirations.

Discussion also took place regarding the potential impact on local employment opportunities and the need to balance housing and economic objectives.

A motion was proposed by Cllr D Edwards-Hughes and seconded by Cllr J Treloar seeking to amend the Council's response so that it strongly objected to redevelopment proposals affecting Woodford Way. Following debate, a vote was taken with the result of:

For: Six
Against: Seven
Abstention: One

Therefore, the motion was lost.

A further amendment was proposed and seconded to amend the Council's response by removing specific references relating to the redevelopment of Woodford Way and strengthening the Council's support for the provision of social rented housing within the proposed strategic town centre allocations.

The amendment having been put to the vote was successful with ten members in favour and four against.

Resolved:

1. That, the Council's response to the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2043 consultation be approved subject to the agreed amendments.

520 **SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER NO 5(W)**

Resolved:

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

521 **COMMUNITY ASSET ACQUISITION & MANAGEMENT POLICY**

The Council received the report of the Town Clerk/C.E.O. regarding a proposed Community Asset Acquisition and Management Policy which had been recommended for approval by the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee, subject to a further addition.

Members discussed the principles that should apply when considering opportunities to acquire or manage community assets in the future. It was noted that any future proposals would require careful assessment of financial implications, ongoing maintenance liabilities, community benefit and strategic fit with the Council's objectives.

The Council noted that the policy was intended to provide a consistent framework for evaluating opportunities as they arose and to assist the Council in making informed decisions regarding asset ownership and management.

Resolved:

That, the Community Asset Acquisition and Management Policy be adopted.

522 **20MPH SCHEME FEEDBACK**

The Council received and considered the request for feedback on the 20mph speed limits from Oxfordshire County Council.

Members expressed concerns regarding levels of compliance and the apparent lack of enforcement, particularly on residential roads. It was noted that many, though not all, of the roads subject to the 20mph speed limits featured an education or nursing care establishment.

Members discussed the benefits of obtaining speed and accident data referenced in the correspondence to assist in assessing the effectiveness of the scheme and also considered whether Vehicle Activated Signs (VAS) may help improve driver compliance.

Recognising that views differed on the effectiveness of the scheme, Members agreed that individual Councillors should submit any comments directly to Oxfordshire County Council.

Resolved:

1. That, the correspondence be noted and;
2. That, officers request the speed and accident data referred to in the correspondence and;
3. That, individual Councillors submit any comments on the scheme directly to Oxfordshire County Council.

523 **GOVERNANCE – REGISTER OF INTERESTS, HOSPITALITY & DATA PROTECTION**

The Council received the report of the Deputy Town Clerk, which reminded Members of their responsibility to governance obligations, including their register of interests, hospitality declarations and adherence to data protection legislation.

Members were advised that additional training could be arranged through the Deputy Town Clerk where required. It was also noted that Members notify the Town Council of any relevant changes, as well as the Monitoring Officer, so that its records could be kept accurate and up to date.

Resolved:

1. That, the contents of the report be noted and;
2. That, Members be reminded of their responsibility to maintain up-to-date records in respect of Register of interests, Gifts & Hospitality and adhere to Data Protection legislation and;
3. That, Members notify the Deputy Town Clerk of any training needs.

524 **WITNEY HIGH STREET & MARKET SQUARE WORKS**

The Council received an update from the Leader regarding the High Street Improvement Scheme.

Members were advised that she had attended a meeting the previous week with West Oxfordshire District Council's, Infrastructure and Section 106 lead, and Conservation Officer, with a view to the District Council financially assisting Oxfordshire County Council with the completion of the final stages of the project.

It was anticipated that a landscape architect would be appointed to consider the scheme alongside the current Marriott's Walk redevelopment proposals that WODC were working on.

The Leader expressed her concern regarding the availability of OCC funding required to complete elements of the existing scheme, including resurfacing the carriageway.

Resolved:

That, the update be noted.

525 **CIVIC ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Mayor reported on civic engagements undertaken since the previous meeting and highlighted forthcoming engagements and events.

The Mayor thanked her Deputy, fellow Members and officers for their support and attendance at her recent charity raising events.

Resolved:

That, the report be noted.

526 **HEALTH & SAFETY**

The Council received the report of the Compliance e Health & Safety Officer regarding Health & Safety Matters

It was highlighted to Members the impact of the recent dry weather in regard to sudden branch drop events that impact this may have on insurance claims. The RFO advised also that through this was not currently an issue it could be so in the future.

Resolved:

That, the report be noted.

527 **VANDALISM & ANTI SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR**

The Council received the report of vandalism and anti-social behaviour incidents that had occurred since the last meeting.

Though only one incident was shown recorded, Members were advised that Officers and work personnel would be encouraged to ensure any and all incidents were advised so that they may be recorded and reported to Thames Valley Police if appropriate.

Resolved:

That, the report be noted.

528 **COMMUNICATION FROM THE LEADER**

There was no communication from the Leader.

529 **OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL - WITNEY HIGH STREET/MARKET PLACE WORKS**

The Council received the response of Oxfordshire Country Council in respect of the letter sent by the Leader of the Town Council

Resolved:

That, the correspondence be noted.

530 **OXBUS 2040**

The Council received the confirmation of the upcoming consultation regarding Oxfordshire Bus Services which was now proposed to commence 19 October 2026.

Resolved:

That, the correspondence be noted.

531 **OXFORDSHIRE CASUALTY REPORT 2025**

The Council received notification of the release of the Oxfordshire Casualty Report 2025. It was acknowledged that Members may wish to refer to this when considering their induvial response to the 20mph feedback request.

Resolved:

That, the report be noted.

532 **POLICE AND CRIME COMMISSIONER NEWSLETTERS**

The Council received the August update newsletter from the Police & Crime Commissioner.

Resolved:

That, the newsletter be noted.

533 **WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL - COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW**

The Council considered correspondence regarding the forthcoming Community Governance Review to be conducted by West Oxfordshire District Council along with the proposed Terms of Reference.

Members discussed the purpose of the review and the potential opportunities it presented to examine governance arrangements affecting the town. Interest was sought from Members willing to participate in future work associated with the review process.

Resolved:

That, the correspondence be noted and that interested Members notify the Deputy Town Clerk of their willingness to participate in future review work.

534 **OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL - ANNUAL RESIDENTS' SURVEY RESPONSE**

The Council received the response from Oxfordshire Country Council regarding the submission of feedback received via the Annual Satisfaction Survey.

Resolved:

That, the correspondence be noted.

535 **WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL - ANNUAL RESIDENTS' SURVEY RESPONSE**

The Council received the response from West Oxfordshire District Council regarding the submission of feedback received via the Annual Satisfaction Survey.

Resolved:

That, the correspondence be noted.

536 **BRITISH REGIONAL TRANSPORT ASSOCIATION - SUPPORT FOR RAIL LINK**

The Council received the correspondence relating to the request to support rail travel from the British Regional Transport Association.

Resolved:

That, the correspondence be noted.

537 **QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

There were no questions for the Leader of the Council.

538 **SEALING OF DOCUMENTS**

Resolved:
That, the seal of the Council be affixed to any documents arising from decisions taken by this meeting of the Council.

The meeting closed at: 9.31 pm

Chair