Stronger Communities
Committee Meeting of Witney Town Council

Monday, 16th November, 2026 at 6.00 pm

To members of the Stronger Communities Committee - T Ashby, G Meadows, A Bailey, D Enright, A Mubin, S Simpson, J Doughty and R Smith (and all other Town Councillors for information).

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

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

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 **Stronger Communities 16.11.2026**

Agenda

1. **Apologies for absence**

   To consider apologies and reasons for absence.

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

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

2. **Declarations of Interest**

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

Date of Publication 10 November 2026

3. **Minutes** (Pages 4 - 14)

a) To receive and consider the minutes of the Stronger Communities Committee held on 21 September 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.

5. **Finance Report: Revised Revenue Budget 2026/27 and Draft Base Revenue Budget for 2027/28** (Pages 15 - 25)

To receive and consider the report of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) and the Draft Revised Revenue Budget for 2026/27 and Draft Budget for 2027/28.

6. **Revenue Growth Items, Special Revenue Projects, and Capital Projects** (Pages 26 - 29)

To receive and consider the report of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) with an update on the current year's work programme relating to Capital and Special Revenue Projects; as well as projects identified during the course of the year for inclusion as Revenue Growth Items or Special Revenue Projects in the Council's Revenue Budget or Capital Projects for 2027/28 and beyond.

Communications

7. **Communications Report** (Pages 30 - 33)

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

8. **Press Coverage** (Pages 34 - 35)

To receive details of Press coverage prepared by the Administrative Assistant – Communities & Engagement.

Community Engagement

9. **Community Engagement Report**

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

10. **Youth Council Update** (Pages 36 - 39)

To receive and consider the report of the Administration Assistant – Communications & Engagement.

a) **Youth Council Minutes** (Pages 40 - 41)

To receive the minutes of the Youth Council meeting held on 5 November 2026.

11. **Youth Services** (Pages 42 - 53)

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

Town Hall, Market Square
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Mrs Sharon Groth FSLCC FCMI Assoc.CIPD
Town Clerk

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Street Furniture & Infrastructure

12. **VAS Signs for Witney** (Pages 54 - 59)

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



Town Clerk

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STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Monday, 21 September 2026

At 6.02 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney

Present:

Councillor G Meadows (Vice-Chair, in the Chair)

Councillors:	D Enright	R Crouch (In place of A Bailey)
	S Simpson	J Treloar (In place of J Doughty)
	R Smith	
Officers:	Adam Clapton	Deputy Town Clerk
	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
	Annie Hathaway	Admin Assistant - Communications & Engagement
	Polly Inness	Communications & Community Engagement Officer
	Nigel Warner	Responsible Financial Officer
Others:	One member of the public.	

SC449 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Bailey & J Doughty, Councillors R Crouch and J Treloar attended as substitutes respectively.

Apologies for absence were also received from Councillors A Mubin & T Ashby.

SC450 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest from Members.

SC451 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Stronger Communities committee held on 15 June 2026 were received.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Stronger Communities committee held on 15 June 2026 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the chair.

SC452 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

The Committee adjourned for this item.

The committee received representations from a resident of Kingfisher Meadows concerning Agenda Item 15 (Burford Road – Replacement Bus Shelter Request)

The Committee reconvened.

SC453 **BURFORD ROAD - REPLACEMENT BUS SHELTER REQUEST**

With the permission of the Chair, this item was moved up the agenda so the member of public could hear the discussion and outcome.

The Committee considered a request relating to the replacement of the existing bus shelter on Burford Road to include a sedum roof and received an update from the Deputy Town Clerk regarding historic discussions on the asset and the possibility of potential funding opportunities from S106 monies. Members noted that similar shelters had recently been installed elsewhere at a cost of approximately £10,000.

Whilst recognising that further details and costings would be required before any final decision could be taken, Members were unanimously in support, in principle, for an upgraded shelter and agreed that opportunities for external funding should continue to be explored before any financial commitment was considered by the Council.

Recommended:

That, the replacement and upgrade of the Burford Road bus shelter be supported in principle, subject to funding opportunities and detailed costings being identified.

Cllr J Treloar left the meeting between 6:11pm and 6:14pm – and therefore did not participate in the vote regarding the replacement bus shelter.

SC454 **FINANCE REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) concerning the financial position of items under the remit of the Committee.

Members noted that expenditure remained broadly in line with expectations for this stage of the financial year and considered matters that may require inclusion within the forthcoming budget-setting process.

Members considered future infrastructure requirements including bus shelters, grit bins and street furniture. A Member raised the issue of future maintenance responsibilities arising from the High Street improvement works and emphasised that any future budget provision should relate to ongoing maintenance rather than capital replacement or enhancement works.

Members were reminded that Oxfordshire County Council would be expected to provide an appropriate commuted sum to support future maintenance when responsibility for street furniture was transferred to the Town Council. It was also noted that Oxfordshire County Council should continue to bear full responsibility for delivering and funding the proposed improvement scheme.

Members also discussed the annual provision for maintenance of the Church Clock and noted that this should continue within future budgets. It was further noted that any repair project would be considered separately through the work of the Project Officer.

In addition, Members discussed the RAF's forthcoming 50th Anniversary of the Freedom of Witney in 2027 and noted that provision may be required within future budgets to support commemorative activities associated with RAF Brize Norton. A budget of £750 was unanimously agreed to support the facilitation and refreshments for the celebrations.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and;
2. That, the management accounts for the period 1 April to 31 July 2026 be approved and;
3. That, a budget of £750 be considered within the 2027/28 budget process for the RAF 50th Anniversary of the Freedom of Witney.

The Responsible Financial Officer left the meeting at 6:20pm

SC455 **COMMUNICATIONS REPORT**

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

Members considered the suggestion of developing a Town Council podcast as an additional communications channel. Whilst recognising the potential opportunities to promote Council activity and community initiatives, Members felt that podcasting generally achieved limited engagement for local authorities and that current officer resources would be better focused on existing communication methods. It was also observed that successful podcasts were often driven by individuals rather than institutions. Consequently, Members did not support progressing a podcast at this stage.

The Committee welcomed the revised format of the annual budget survey and agreed that a shorter and more accessible approach would encourage greater public participation. Members felt that asking residents to identify their key priorities would provide clearer feedback than requiring the ranking of multiple individual services.

Members also considered the proposed Town Guide and remained supportive of developing the publication as an additional communication tool. It was noted that one of the Committee's Terms of Reference was *"to oversee community engagement with all residents of Witney, relevant stakeholders and businesses"* and Members considered that the Town Guide would help fulfil that objective. Members welcomed the fact that the publication would be produced biennially, would not place a significant burden upon officer resources and would provide an additional opportunity to promote Council services, local businesses, visitor information and community organisations.

With regard to website accessibility, Members welcomed the considerable work already undertaken by officers to improve compliance and accessibility. They were satisfied that the current approach provided an appropriate level of assurance and agreed that it would not be necessary to subscribe to the proposed external monitoring service at the present time. Members expressed their appreciation to officers for the progress already achieved in improving accessibility across the Council's website.

The Committee discussed future arrangements for distribution of the Spring Newsletter and acknowledged that no delivery method had proven entirely reliable. Members discounted the use of Royal Mail, citing previous experience which suggested it had not been effective in reaching residents. Whilst recognising that hand-delivery was not without its limitations, Members considered it to be the most effective option currently available and were keen to continue supporting a local delivery company.

Members also considered options for the provision of lockable noticeboards at play areas and recreational facilities. The Committee welcomed the proposal and unanimously supported the fourth example presented within the report. It was noted that three boards would be required and that £1,500 should be included within future budget discussions to allow for their purchase.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted.
2. That, the revised budget survey be adopted;
3. That, development of the Town Guide continue;
4. That, hand delivery remains the preferred method for future newsletter distribution and;
5. That, provision of £1,500 be considered within the 2027/28 budget process for the installation of three lockable noticeboards.

SC456 **PRESS COVERAGE**

The Committee received details of recent press coverage relating to the activities of the Town Council.

Members welcomed the breadth of positive media coverage achieved during the reporting period and noted the continuing efforts of officers to promote Council services, community events and local initiatives.

Resolved:

That, the report be noted

SC457 **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Communications & Community Engagement Officer (C&CEO) which provided updates on Heritage Open Day, Christmas activities, the Eco Fair, World Mental Health Day and the forthcoming Citizen of the Year Awards.

The Committee was pleased to hear of the success of Heritage Open Day and noted the positive feedback received from residents regarding the opportunity to access local heritage sites, historic buildings and local heritage displays.

Members also welcomed proposals for World Mental Health Day and agreed that the promotion of resources relating to social media usage, doom-scrolling and personal wellbeing should proceed as outlined within the report.

Members noted that no nominations had been received for the Young Citizen of the Year category in either 2024 or 2025. The Committee agreed that councillors should actively promote

the award within their communities and that additional youth organisations should be contacted directly to encourage nominations to come forward.

In response to a Member's question regarding the Christmas Light Switch-On event, Officers advised that discussions between Witney Rotary Club and Oxfordshire County Council remained ongoing in relation to the potential impact of the High Street improvement works and it was hoped that no issues would arise affecting delivery of their event.

The Committee considered proposals relating to Town Council bunting and reviewed designs produced by pupils from Blake C of E Primary School. Members praised the quality and youthfulness of the work undertaken and felt that similar opportunities should be offered to all Witney primary schools. It was suggested that bunting produced by schools could be showcased within the Market Square and supported by an online gallery to celebrate the work of participating pupils. Members agreed that development of the wider schools' bunting initiative should be referred to the Witney: Past, Present & Future Working Party and that it be developed as a St George's Day activity for 2027, allowing completed bunting to be displayed in the Market Square as part of the celebrations.

Members also considered the procurement of Town Council bunting and expressed a preference for a modern design featuring both the Witney logo and the Town Council logo. It was agreed that two lengths of bunting be purchased at a cost of £374 per length.

The Committee discussed the possibility of a Big Lunch event in June 2027 and agreed that partnership working with local organisations represented the most practical method of delivery. Members welcomed the potential involvement of Courtside Hubs CIC and the Witney Town Band in any future event. Following discussion, a vote was taken on a proposal to support an additional Children's Play Day with a budget of £1,000 as part of the event. The proposal was carried with four votes in favour, no votes against and two abstentions.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted.
2. That, support be given to the development of a community-led Big Lunch event in June 2027 and;
3. That, provision of £1,000 be included within the 2027/28 budget process to support an additional Play Day associated with the event and;
4. That, officers proceed with the purchase of two 80 metre lengths of Town Council bunting at a cost of £374 per length and;
5. That, the development of a schools' bunting competition be referred to the Witney Past, Present & Future Working Party and;
6. That, councillors and officers actively promote the Young Citizen of the Year category and engage with youth organisations to encourage future nominations.

SC458 **WITNEY FORUM MINUTES**

Resolved:
The Committee received the minutes of the Witney Forum meeting held on 30 June 2026.

That, the minutes of the Witney Forum meeting held on 30 June 2026 be noted.

SC459 **WITNEY: PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE NOTES**

The Committee received the notes of the Witney: Past, Present & Future Working Party meetings held on 26 May and 15 July 2026 from the Chair of the Working Party.

Members noted the ongoing discussions regarding plans to mark the 50th Anniversary of the granting of the Freedom of Witney to RAF Brize Norton in 2027. It was recognised that early budget provision would assist the Venue & Events Officer with planning in support of the commemorative activities.

Members discussed the scale and significance of the occasion, noting that 2027 would also mark the 90th Anniversary of the establishment of RAF Brize Norton. It was agreed that an appropriate budget provision should be made to support the facilitation of the event and the provision of refreshments for participants and guests. A sum of £750 was unanimously supported for inclusion within the 2027/28 budget considerations.

Recommended:

1. That, the notes of the Working Party meetings be noted and;
2. That, provision of £750 be recommended for inclusion within the 2027/28 budget to support activities associated with the RAF's 50th Anniversary of the Freedom of Witney.

SC460 **YOUTH COUNCIL**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Administrative Assistant - Communities & Engagement together with the minutes of the Youth Council meeting held on 3 September 2026.

Members welcomed the continued enthusiasm shown by Youth Councillors and were pleased to note that two additional members had joined. It was further noted that the Annual General Meeting of the Youth Council would shortly take place, allowing members to elect office holders and review future priorities.

Members welcomed progress on the forthcoming "A Slice of Politics" event planned for 29 October and recognised it as a valuable opportunity for young people to engage with councillors and local decision makers. In considering the catering options presented, Members noted that the preferred option represented the best value for money.

The Committee also considered a request from the Youth Council to amend the upper age limit for membership. Members recognised the importance of retaining young people whilst they completed post-16 education and discussed a number of options, including the creation of a mentoring role for former members. During discussion, concerns were raised regarding safeguarding responsibilities, accountability and the potential requirement for safeguarding training should a formal mentoring arrangement be introduced. Following consideration of the options presented, Members unanimously agreed that Youth Council members should be permitted to retain their position until the end of the academic year in which they reach the age of 18, allowing continued membership whilst undertaking full-time education and therefore providing a practical upper age limit of 19.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and;

2. That, Business 1 be approved as the supplier for refreshments for the "A Slice of Politics" event at a cost of £75 and;
3. That, Youth Council members be permitted to retain their position until the end of the academic year in which they reach the age of 18, allowing continued membership whilst in full-time education and therefore providing a practical upper age limit of 19 and;
4. That, no formal mentoring category be introduced and;
5. That, the minutes of the Youth Council meeting held on 3 September 2026 be noted.

Cllr R Crouch left the meeting between 7:13pm and 7:16pm.

SC461 **YOUTH SERVICES UPDATE**

The Committee received and considered the report along with a verbal update from the Deputy Town Clerk concerning youth services within Witney.

Members noted that all 2026/27 Youth Services Grant agreements had been completed and that a sum of £3,500 remained ringfenced for any further youth related grant applications. Members also noted that monitoring reports had been requested from previous grant recipients so that they may be assessed as part of the grant monitoring arrangements.

Members welcomed an interim update provided on the work of The Station Detached Youth Service. The Deputy Town Clerk provided a verbal update outlining the significant success of the converted milk float project, which had substantially increased engagement with young people across the town. It was noted that detached youth sessions which had previously engaged with around ten young people were now regularly engaging with between fifty and eighty young people, with one recent session attracting 112 young people. Members were also pleased to hear that the mentoring programme continued to perform well and noted that the next stage of development would be the creation of a youth café run by young people for young people.

The Committee was pleased to note the reduction in anti-social behaviour at The Leys during the summer period and welcomed the positive outcomes reported through Thames Valley Police's Operation Just. It was also suggested that the opening of Courtside Hubs CIC had contributed positively by increasing the presence of users of the facilities creating a more active and supervised environment.

Members agreed that the services being provided continued to deliver significant social value and acknowledged the importance of maintaining support for youth-related initiatives through the budget-setting process. In considering future provision, Members supported the continuation of the Youth Services Grant Scheme, ongoing funding for Home-Start Oxford and the inflationary uplift required under the Service Level Agreement with The Station.

Members noted that no further information had been received from APCAM regarding the Mental Health Drop-In Sessions and agreed that consideration of future funding should be deferred pending receipt of this additional information.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted.
2. That, a budget of £20,000 be retained for the Youth Services Grant Scheme in 2027/28 and;
3. That, a budget of £12,000 be retained for Home-Start Oxford in 2027/28 and;

4. That, provision of £29,250, subject to inflation, be included within the 2027/28 budget for The Station Detached Youth Service and;
5. That, future provision for APCAM Mental Health Drop-In Sessions be considered once further information has been received.

SC462 **IN BLOOM**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Communications & Community Engagement Officer regarding In Bloom initiatives for 2027.

Members welcomed proposals marking the tenth anniversary of wheelbarrows being used for the Schools In Bloom Challenge and supported the continuation of existing arrangements which have proven successful in encouraging participation from schools and community groups. Members agreed that the existing Schools In Bloom voucher value of £40 remained appropriate and noted that compost would continue to be provided. Given the increasing cost of plants and gardening materials, Members unanimously supported an increase in Community Gardening vouchers to £75.

The Committee noted that the Town Council would not be submitting an entry to the Thames & Chiltern In Bloom Awards during 2027. Instead, efforts would be focused on continuing improvements to Unterhaching Park, including the introduction of additional features such as sensory gardening, woodland planting and other environmental enhancements with the aim of preparing the site for future entry. In response to a Members comment, officers would liaise with West Oxfordshire District Council regarding their proposals for a sensory style planting and landscaping within the green space at Marriotts Walk adjacent to Underhaching Park in order that they complement each other.

Members welcomed proposals for special tenth anniversary prizes and supported visits to Witney Lake & Country Park for schools, led by the Council's Green Spaces and biodiversity staff. It was felt that this would provide an enjoyable educational opportunity whilst helping to promote the facilities and environmental work taking place by the Council at the Country Park.

During discussion, Members considered possible themes for the anniversary challenge. Following several suggestions, it was agreed that the theme should simply be" The Number Ten", providing schools with maximum flexibility and encouraging creative interpretation by participants.

In considering future financial requirements, Members agreed that a budget provision of £4,200 be recommended for 2027/28. This would comprise funds to support the Schools In Bloom Challenge, awards and community gardening initiatives together with £2,200 earmarked for improvements at Unterhaching Park.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and;
2. That, Schools In Bloom vouchers remain at £40 and;
3. That, Community Gardening vouchers increase to £75 and;
4. That, the theme for the 2027 Schools In Bloom Challenge be "The Number Ten" and;
5. That, the proposed tenth anniversary prizes of visits to Witney Lake & Country Park be approved and;
6. That, a budget of £4,200 be included within the 2027/28 budget, including £2,200 for improvements to Unterhaching Park.

SC463 **WODC CONSULTATION - PROPOSED CONTROLS RELATING TO DOG FOULING**

The Committee Clerk provided a verbal update regarding the consultation that was undertaken by West Oxfordshire District Council on proposed Public Space Protection Order controls relating to dog fouling.

Members were reminded that the consultation document had been circulated to the Committee during the consultation period to allow comments and observations to be submitted for consideration.

It was noted that no responses had been received from Members and, consequently, no official response had been submitted by the Town Council to West Oxfordshire District Council regarding the proposed Order.

Resolved:

That, the verbal update be noted.

SC464 **COMMUNITY & CIVIC EVENTS**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Venue & Events Officer.

Members welcomed updates relating to events held during the summer including Witney Pride, Witney Music Festival, Witney Carnival, Oxfordshire Play Associations Play Day and other community events facilitated on Town Council land.

Particular praise was expressed for the continued success of OPA's Play Day and the contribution made by volunteer organisations in delivering accessible activities for local families.

The Deputy Town Clerk provided a verbal update and advised that a detailed report had been requested from the organisers of Witney Music Festival for consideration by the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee on 28 September as part of future budget discussions.

The Committee also received an update regarding forthcoming civic events, including Remembrance Sunday and the Advent Fayre. The Deputy Town Clerk advised that officers were continuing to engage with those responsible for the High Street improvement scheme and were preparing contingency arrangements should the works not be completed by the anticipated completion date of 3 November.

Members recognised the importance of councillor participation in supporting delivery of the Advent Fayre and one Member encouraged Members to ensure that 29 November was reserved in their diaries to maximise support for the event.

Members noted that the revised dates for Circus Ginnett had resulted in the event taking place closer to other activities than would normally be desirable. It was noted that officers would encourage earlier booking of future circus events to provide greater flexibility and reduce the likelihood of clashes with other events in the Council's calendar.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and;

2. That, subsidised use of The Leys be approved for Witney Pride and Witney Carnival in 2027 and;
3. That, provision of £1,000 for the existing annual OPA Play Day be retained within the 2027/28 budget process.

SC465 **WINTER PREPARATIONS**

The Committee received and considered the report concerning winter preparations and the provision of grit bins.

Members reviewed existing grit bin provision across the town and identified two locations where additional bins may improve public safety. The Member suggesting he would send location specifics to officers for submission and consideration by Oxfordshire County Council.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and;
2. That, the installation of two salt bins be recommended for approval at South Lawn and Burwell Meadow for the sum of £600 for both.

SC466 **NEW PUBLIC BINS POLICY & REQUESTS**

The Committee received and considered the proposed Public Bins Policy.

Members discussed several requests received from residents and acknowledged continuing concerns regarding litter and dog fouling across parts of the town. Whilst recognising public expectations, Members reiterated that responsibility for the provision and maintenance of bins on land outside the Town Council's ownership rested with West Oxfordshire District Council.

The Committee felt that the proposed policy provided a clear and proportionate framework for future decision making whilst ensuring that resources remained focused upon land and facilities owned or managed by the Town Council.

Recommended:

1. That, the Public Bins Policy be approved and recommended to the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee for formal adoption.
2. That, no outstanding requests for bins made to the Town Council should be progressed.

SC467 **WITNEY TOWN CENTRE WAYFINDING**

The Committee received correspondence from West Oxfordshire District Council regarding the proposed wayfinding scheme. Proposed illustrations of potential signage, together with a draft Memorandum of Understanding relating to an archway project, had been received from West Oxfordshire District Council, circulated to Members and tabled for consideration at the meeting.

Members welcomed the principle of providing improved wayfinding within the town centre and considered the example designs provided. It was generally felt that any signage should reflect the heritage, identity and character of Witney, including reference to the town's blanket-making heritage, whilst retaining a modern appearance. Members also supported the inclusion of clear mapping and visitor information to assist residents and visitors navigating the town centre.

The Committee also considered correspondence relating to the potential Langdale Court archway project. Members supported the principle that any future agreement with West Oxfordshire District Council should clearly protect the Town Council's interests as landowner and ensure that ownership, maintenance, liability and future costs are fully considered.

Resolved:

1. That, the wayfinding project be supported in principle and;
2. That, officers continue discussions with West Oxfordshire District Council regarding detailed designs and future proposals and;
3. That, the Town Council's position as landowner be protected through any agreement associated with the project with points raised by officers.

The meeting closed at: 7.56 pm

Chair

STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Agenda Item:	Finance Report: Revised Revenue Budget 2026/27 and Draft Base Revenue Budget for 2027/28
Meeting Date:	16 November 2026
Contact Officer:	Responsible Financial Officer

Should Members have any queries about this report advance notice would be appreciated, in writing, by 12 noon on Monday 16th November to allow for a full response at the meeting.

The purpose of this report is report to Members in relation to income and expenditure revenue budgets for the year to date, present projections as to the revised revenue estimates for 2026-27 and to present the proposed revenue estimates for 2027-28.

Background

Each year the committees review their estimates of income and expenditure so that proposals can be submitted to the Council in relation to revised revenue estimates for the current year and proposals for the next year.

Consequently this report presents Members with the revised budget for 2026/27 and the first draft of the revenue budget for 2027/28 for the cost centres which are the responsibility of this Committee. Please see attached document.

The budget process is ongoing and there is further work to undertake. Therefore this report will be subject to updates when this Committee's estimates are presented to the meeting of the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee on 23rd November.

Current Situation

For the Stronger Communities Committee the following cost centres are in place and these are shown in the report:

402 – Community Infrastructure

408 – Community Activities

Cost centres, comprising three digits, typically represent a discrete service entity, to which income and expenditure is allocated against previously agreed revenue budgets.

Within each cost centre income and expenditure is then allocated to a four-digit nominal ledger code; these codes are common across the cost centres. Nominal ledger codes further define the costs associated with the cost centre and correspond to a specific type of account, such as materials or staffing costs. Codes commencing with "1" are income codes; codes commencing with "4" are expenditure codes.

The format of this report is straightforward; the first two columns relate to the original budget from 2025/26 against the actual figures for last year. The middle columns relate to the current year's original budget, actual expenditure year to date, the projected budget to 31 March 2027, based on the latest estimates. The right-hand columns relate to the draft budget for 2027/28. Note that the financial software the Council uses shows this budget as "Agreed" when it should state "Proposed."

The Committee's revenue budget growth items for 2027/28, and its capital/special revenue projects programme for 2027/28 and beyond are dealt with as a separate budget item.

Budget parameters for 2027/28

Draft **revenue budgets** are prepared based upon current activities and projected patterns of income and expenditure. Any additional revenue expenditure is considered separately as Revenue Growth Items.

1. Fees and Charges

   Not applicable for this Committee; income comprises grants and donations.

2. Staffing Costs

   The national pay award for 2025-26 was agreed at 3.3%.
   The agreed budget parameter for 2027-28 is an increase of 3.5%.

3. Utilities

   There remains massive uncertainty regarding **gas and electricity prices** and these will change depending on the increasingly unstable international circumstances. At this stage the RFO's working assumption is to budget for current levels of usage plus a price rise of 15% but this will be subject to change during the budget cycle.

   In relation to **water and sewerage charges** there have been large increases in recent years but there is no information online in relation to 2027-28. Services are being assessed on a case-by-case basis, to reflect current usage, and then with an increase of 5% allowed . These are reflected in recharges only for this Committee.

   Regarding National Non-Domestic Rates the increase for 2027-28 this will be

announced in the government's budget but is normally based on the CPI in the autumn, which will be around 3.75%. These are reflected in recharges only for this Committee.

4. Insurance

The Council's Long-Term Agreement (LTA) with Zurich Municipal will apply during 2027-28, as agreed by the Council on 30th March 2026. The Council went through a tender process earlier this year but as anticipated premiums increased sharply, reflecting the fact that they had not increased in terms of rating for five years.

The new LTA guarantees the same rate (insurance charge per £1K insured) for three years from 1st April 2026 although premiums will rise to reflect increased sums insured e.g., due to buildings inflation. Increased insured risks will impact the budget e.g., in relation to the Windrush Place Pavilion ends as of 31 March 2026.

The budget will be based on current year's premiums, known additional perils and a 3.5% inflation uplift, revised down from 4%.

5. Other expenditure lines

When considering the estimates the RFO examines each individual budget line, looking at the historic trends and known future developments so a flat percentage is not applied uniformly across the estimates. There are likely to be some areas e.g. fuel, where a steep increase will be proposed. However where a cost-of-living increase is applied, 3.5% will be used for 2027-28, revised down from 3.75%.

BASE REVENUE BUDGETS

Members may wish to note the following general comments:

1. The actual year to date figures are for the first seven months of the financial year, the period April to October 2026 but only include the recharges from central budgets to 30th September 2026. Note previous committee estimates during this cycle have viewed figures for the period April to September 2026.

2. At this stage in the budget the committees are asked to consider their spending. The funding of this spending and the utilisation of earmarked reserves is a matter which will be considered by the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee later in the cycle.

3. It should be noted that a significant proportion of expenditure for this Committee's budgets relates to recharges from **central budgets**. The latter will be considered by PGF at its next meeting but for now Members may wish to note the following:
   (i) Works team recharges for the year to 30 September 2026 are based on timesheet analysis. This means that there will often be significant variation

against individual cost centre budgets depending on what works have taken place on individual sites.

(ii) The revised 2026-27 estimates are, for now, simply included at the same level as the original budgets. Note that overall, in relation to central budget costs it is considered at this stage that expenditure outturn will be within these budgets.

(iii) The 2027-28 estimates are based at this stage on an overall inflationary increase of 3.5% in relation to the central budgets, noting that there may be some changes between individual cost centres 601 (works team), 602 (central support) and 604 (works depot). The increase may change when these budgets are reviewed ahead of the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee meeting on 23rd November 2026.

4. There are major inflationary pressures on the Council and so increases have been kept as low as possible. Members will see that some budgets have been reduced or removed to avoid any over-provision. If additional funds are required in-year then increased use of virements between codes is encouraged i.e. funding an overspend on one budget from underspends elsewhere. It is also anticipated that more use of "holding budgets" will be introduced whereby a budget is established which can be used by a number of cost centres and whereby virements are made when there is an expenditure need.

<u>Notes in relation to specific items</u>

Time has not allowed for a comprehensive commentary on every item in the accounts but some items of interest are detailed below:

1052/402 – this relates to income recharges for any memorial benches installed and varies year on year.

1099/402 – this relates to income given as a social contribution from the Christmas lights contractor from which seasonal-related grants totalling £1,000 are awarded from the associated expenditure line 4113/402.

1171/402 – donations received relate to sponsorship of Christmas lights. As this is sponsorship it is subject to VAT. The budget has been reduced from £7,500 (original 2026-27) to £4,800 for next year, to reflect the income in recent years.

4014/402 – electricity – relates to floodlighting of the Buttercross, St Mary's Church and the War Memorial.

4035/4036/4037 – maintenance codes. Revised downwards on both revised 2026-27 and initial 2027-28 estimates to reflect expenditure in recent years. Note (i) if expenditure above estimate were to be required then it would be vired (transferred) between codes and

could be transferred from other cost centres if required and (ii) these codes only relate to materials; the bulk of the maintenance costs relate to labour and are met through staff overhead recharges.

4035/402 – subject to requirements between now and the end of the year, the revised budget of £2,000 would allow for the sedan roof at Valance Crescent to be funded from revenue and so the earmarked reserve would not be called on.

4208/402 – Covid memorial. Budget of £100 for 2027-28. The Council previously agreed to add a new sign in the hope of deterring ASB.

4215/402 – in year budget for In Bloom increased to £5,500 through virement of £2,000 from the Leys budget, which has not been utilised in recent years. The budget has been revised down for 2026-27 to reflect the expenditure during the season and included at £4,200 for 2027-28 to reflect minute SC462(6), which includes £2,200 for related improvements to Unterhaching Park. Note this budget may be subject to further refinement.

1170/408 – grants received in current year revised downwards to £0. These vary considerably year-on-year according to activity and opportunities. £1,000 included in 2027-28.

4008/408 – training in 2026-27 related to traffic management and control for events and funding of £1,475 was vired from 4008/601 (works).

Grants – these have been retained in the 2027-28 budget but at the same amounts as for 2026-27, to reflect the inflationary pressures on the Council. However inflationary increases are allowed for 4104 (Carnival/ Lights Switch-on) where it is known that the organisers budgets to deliver these events are under pressure and a request for an increase is likely and 4172 (Detached Youth Work) where an inflationary increase is required by the Service Level Agreement.

4141/408 – previously this line was described as Events. This has been redesignated as Community Engagement and Communications to reflect the nature of the expenditure in this line. The budget suggested for 2027-28 should be sufficient to fund the £1,000 requested by the Witney Past Present and Future Working Party towards the St George's Day event. Note also the Council does have an earmarked reserve in relation to events amounting to £5,413.

<u>Summary</u>

Overall the budget estimates for this Committee show:

Original 2026-27 revenue budget: £331,319 (adjusted for virements)

Revised 2026-27 revenue budget: £323,337

Proposed 2027-28 revenue budget: £337,875 (increase of 2.0 % on 2026-27 original)

Note the above figures will likely change when the revenue costs of works/ central budgets are considered by the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee. Members will further wish to take in to account that the Council has major ongoing capital projects and is also taking on new facilities and this will be an important consideration in setting a balanced budget.

Corporate Strategy

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

1. A Forward Looking Town Council

Impact Assessments

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

a) Equality – no implications directly resulting from this report.
b) Biodiversity - no implications directly resulting from this report.
c) Crime & Disorder - no implications directly resulting from this report.
d) Environment and climate emergency - no implications directly resulting from 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.

The RFO has approached the budget with prudence so as accurate budget as possible can be set at this early stage, although there may be some opportunities to make savings if required to balance the budget. The budget must also be realistic; if adequate budgets are not set then service delivery is likely to be affected.

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

Social Value

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

Financial implications

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

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

Recommendations

Member are invited to note the report and

1. Consider the revised base revenue budget for 2026-27 and the estimated base revenue budgets for 2027-28, as detailed in the draft estimates.
2. Make a recommendation to the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee regarding the initial revenue budget for 2027-28 as detailed in this report and the estimates.

Witney Town Council Current Year

Annual Budget - By Committee (Actual YTD Month 7)

Note: Initial draft revenue estimates - Stronger Communities Committee - 16 November 2026

		2025-26 Final		2026-27				Initial Estimate 2027-28		
		Budget	Actual	Total	Actual YTD	Projected	Committed	Agreed	EMR	Carried Forward
Stronger Communities										
402	**COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE**									
1052	EXPENSES RECOVERED	1,350	0	1,000	0	1,000	0	1,000	0	0
1099	MISCELLANEOUS INCOME	0	1,500	1,000	0	1,000	0	1,000	0	0
1171	DONATIONS RECEIVED	10,350	4,800	7,500	0	4,500	0	4,800	0	0
	Total Income	11,700	6,300	9,500	0	6,500	0	6,800	0	0
4014	ELECTRICITY	3,400	2,663	2,100	670	2,100	0	2,415	0	0
4025	INSURANCE	115	112	150	122	122	0	125	0	0
4035	BUS SHELTER MAINTENANCE	3,000	303	3,000	0	2,000	0	2,000	0	0
4036	PROPERTY MAINTENANCE	2,600	137	2,600	180	1,500	7	2,000	0	0
4037	GROUNDS MAINTENANCE	1,500	401	1,557	0	750	0	1,000	0	0
4105	XMAS LIGHTS, TREE & INFRASTRUC	48,500	50,510	50,300	17,796	50,300	2,615	52,050	0	0
4113	XMAS SOCIAL CONTRN - SEE 1099	0	1,500	1,000	0	1,000	0	1,000	0	0
4166	DEFIBRILLATOR EXPENDITURE	4,000	377	4,000	0	2,000	0	3,500	0	0
4200	STREET FURNITURE	5,000	6,953	5,000	1,994	5,000	19	5,175	0	0
4208	COVID-19 MEMORIAL	0	0	0	0	0	0	100	0	0
4210	CHURCH CLOCK	1,500	154	1,500	1,500	1,500	0	1,500	0	0
4215	IN BLOOM - INC SCHOOLS CHALLEN	3,500	3,974	5,500	1,182	1,182	0	4,200	0	0
4888	O/S STAFF RECHARGE	15,000	8,087	16,715	3,557	16,715	0	17,300	0	0
4890	O/S O'HEAD RECHARGE	977	641	988	317	988	0	1,023	0	0
4892	C/S STAFF RCHG	10,681	12,567	10,160	6,613	10,160	0	10,516	0	0
4893	C/S O'HEAD RCHG	2,820	3,710	2,909	2,152	2,909	0	3,011	0	0
4899	DEPOT REALLOCATION	2,133	1,447	2,478	497	2,478	0	2,565	0	0

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		2025-26 Final		2026-27				Initial Estimate 2027-28		
		Budget	Actual	Total	Actual YTD	Projected	Committed	Agreed	EMR	Carried Forward
4990	CONTRN TO CCTV SCH.	11,267	10,000	11,591	0	11,591	0	11,922	0	0
	Overhead Expenditure	115,993	103,536	121,548	36,580	112,295	2,641	121,402	0	0
	402 Net Income over Expenditure	-104,293	-97,236	-112,048	-36,580	-105,795	-2,641	-114,602	0	0
6000	plus Transfer from EMR	0	1,953	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	(104,293)	(95,283)	(112,048)	(36,579)	(105,795)		(114,602)		
408	**COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES**									
1170	GRANTS RECEIVED	1,500	150	1,557	0	0	0	1,000	0	0
1171	DONATIONS RECEIVED	0	2	0	0	400	0	400	0	0
	Total Income	1,500	152	1,557	0	400	0	1,400	0	0
4001	SALARIES	15,118	6,393	7,197	4,379	7,507	0	7,770	0	0
4002	ER'S NIC	1,949	821	929	569	975	0	1,010	0	0
4003	ER'S SUPERANN	3,281	1,385	1,432	869	1,490	0	1,540	0	0
4008	TRAINING	0	0	1,475	1,475	1,475	0	0	0	0
4103	GRANT YOUTH COUNCIL	1,350	0	500	163	500	0	500	0	0
4104	GRANT CARNIVAL/XMAS ROTARY CLB	4,900	5,075	5,100	5,100	5,100	0	5,300	0	0
4106	GRANT - PLAY DAY	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	0	1,000	0	0
4111	WATER SAFETY/EDUCATION	2,000	0	2,000	0	2,000	0	2,000	0	0
4112	GRANT - WITNEY TOWN BAND	660	660	660	0	660	0	660	0	0
4141	COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT/ COMMS	6,977	6,344	7,500	2,268	4,600	425	7,750	0	0
4147	50th Anniversary Grants	0	50	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4148	VE/ VJ 80th Anniversary comm'n	2,023	2,271	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4154	EXPERIENCE OXFORDSHIRE M'SHIP	1,200	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

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Witney Town Council Current Year

Annual Budget - By Committee (Actual YTD Month 7)

Note: Initial draft revenue estimates - Stronger Communities Committee - 16 November 2026

		2025-26 Final		2026-27				Initial Estimate 2027-28		
		Budget	Actual	Total	Actual YTD	Projected	Committed	Agreed	EMR	Carried Forward
4160	TOWN TWINNING	500	0	500	0	500	0	500	0	0
4161	TOWN TWINNING ROOM HIRE	500	58	500	0	200	0	200	0	0
4167	BUS SERVICE	23,500	26,000	26,000	12,250	26,000	0	26,000	0	0
4169	GRANT: CHILDREN & YOUTH	0	18,600	20,000	16,500	20,000	0	20,000	0	0
4170	ADVENT FAYRE	1,000	1,650	1,000	30	1,000	0	1,000	0	0
4172	GRANT - DETACHED YOUTH WORK	18,000	18,000	28,500	18,048	28,400	0	29,250	0	0
4173	GRANT - HOME START	11,000	11,000	12,000	12,000	12,000	0	12,000	0	0
4892	C/S STAFF RCHG	85,443	80,021	81,268	39,946	81,268	0	84,112	0	0
4893	C/S O'HEAD RCHG	25,094	23,073	23,267	12,839	23,267	0	24,081	0	0
	Overhead Expenditure	205,495	202,401	220,828	127,437	217,942	425	224,673	0	0
	408 Net Income over Expenditure	-203,995	-202,249	-219,271	-127,437	-217,542	-425	-223,273	0	0
6000	plus Transfer from EMR	0	18,600	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
6001	less Transfer to EMR	0	6,763	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	(203,995)	(190,412)	(219,271)	(127,437)	(217,542)		(223,273)		
	Stronger Communities - Income	13,200	6,452	11,057	0	6,900	0	8,200	0	0
	Expenditure	321,488	305,937	342,376	164,017	330,237	3,066	346,075	0	0
	Net Income over Expenditure	-308,288	-299,485	-331,319	-164,017	-323,337	-3,066	-337,875	0	0
	plus Transfer from EMR	0	20,553	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	less Transfer to EMR	0	6,763	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	(308,288)	(285,695)	(331,319)	(164,017)	(323,337)		(337,875)		

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Witney Town Council Current Year

Annual Budget - By Committee (Actual YTD Month 7)

Note: Initial draft revenue estimates - Stronger Communities Committee - 16 November 2026

	2025-26 Final		2026-27				Initial Estimate 2027-28		
	Budget	Actual	Total	Actual YTD	Projected	Committed	Agreed	EMR	Carried Forward
Total Budget Income	13,200	6,452	11,057	0	6,900	0	8,200	0	0
Expenditure	321,488	305,937	342,376	164,017	330,237	3,066	346,075	0	0
Net Income over Expenditure	-308,288	-299,485	-331,319	-164,017	-323,337	-3,066	-337,875	0	0
plus Transfer from EMR	0	20,553	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
less Transfer to EMR	0	6,763	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	(308,288)	(285,695)	(331,319)	(164,017)	(323,337)		(337,875)		

STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Agenda Item: Revenue Growth Items, Special Revenue Projects, and Capital Projects

Meeting Date: Monday 16 November 2026

Contact Officer: Responsible Financial Officer

The purpose of this report is to consider Revenue Growth Items, Special Revenue Projects, and Capital Projects in relation to this Committee's services for 2027-28 onwards.

Background

In line with the Council's Financial Regulations the purpose of this report is to enable Members to consider proposed works and projects discussed over the course of the year for potential inclusion in the budgets for 2027-28 and/or subsequent financial years.

Note that these matters are brought to this Committee for consideration but that revenue growth and capital projects are matters for recommendation by the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee at its meeting on 23rd November 2026. It will be for the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee to prioritise projects and recommend funding to the full Council.

Current Situation

2026-27 budget

During 2026-27 the capital budgets affecting the work of Stronger Communities Committee include the following and these will be reviewed by the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee when reviewing the capital programme:

- Bus shelters. A sum of £9,000 was included in current year budget. This has since been supplemented by additional sums from earmarked reserves and from an insurance claim in relation to replacement of a shelter at Oxford Hill.
- Digital signage. A sum of £1,200 was included in relation to the town centre shop. £1,120 spent.

2027-28 budget items for consideration

The following budget items for 2027-28 were discussed at the Stronger Communities Committee in September 2026 for further consideration in the budget cycle:

Minute SC453

"That, the replacement and upgrade of the **Burford Road bus shelter** be supported in principle, subject to funding opportunities and detailed costings being identified."

Typically a new bus shelter would cost c.£10,000.

Minute SC454

"Members considered **future infrastructure requirements** including bus shelters, grit bins and street furniture. A Member raised the issue of future maintenance responsibilities arising from the High Street improvement works and emphasised that any future budget provision should relate to ongoing maintenance rather than capital replacement or enhancement works. Members were reminded that Oxfordshire County Council would be expected to provide an appropriate commuted sum to support future maintenance when responsibility for street furniture was transferred to the Town Council. It was also noted that Oxfordshire County Council should continue to bear full responsibility for delivering and funding the proposed improvement scheme. "

Your officers will review the above, taking into account maintenance budgets across the Council and a figure will go to the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee.

Members also discussed the **annual provision for maintenance of the Church Clock** and noted that this should continue within future budgets. It was further noted that any repair project would be considered separately through the work of the Project Officer. Note that there is already a sum of £1,500 is allowed for in the revenue budget.

Minute SC455

Members also considered options for the provision of **lockable noticeboards at play areas and recreational facilities.** The Committee welcomed the proposal and unanimously supported the fourth example presented within the report. It was noted that three boards would be required and that £1,500 should be included within future budget discussions to allow for their purchase.

The budget bid was taken out by the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee but following clarification at Full Council on 12 October 2026 (Minute 514) that the proposal was that these were effectively information boards providing information for specific play areas rather than noticeboards for events etc, the Council retained this sum in the budget for further consideration during the budget cycle.

Minute SC457

That, provision of £1,000 be included within the 2027/28 budget process to **support an additional Play Day** associated with the event *(the proposed Big Lunch event).*

Minute SC459

That, provision of £750 be recommended for inclusion within the 2027/28 budget to support activities associated with the **RAF's 50th Anniversary of the Freedom of Witney.**

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.

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

a) Equality – no implications directly resulting from this report.
b) Biodiversity - no implications directly resulting from this report.
c) Crime & Disorder - no implications directly resulting from this report.
d) Environment & Climate Emergency - no implications directly resulting from this report.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should consider any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability. The RFO has approached the budget with prudence so as accurate budget as possible can be set at this early stage, although there may be some opportunities to make savings if required to balance the budget.

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

Social Value

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

Financial implications

This report forms part of the Council's due diligence and a process in line with its Financial Regulations. There are likely to be financial implications in relation to the previously agreed revenue growth items in relation to new and enhanced facilities.

With regard to the items suggested at the September meeting of this Committee the financial implications are:

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

Recommendations

Member are invited to note the report.

- It should be noted that the existing revenue growth items and special revenue/capital projects will be considered by the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee later in the budget cycle.
- The Committee is requested to consider the items suggested at the September meeting of this Committee and whether they should be included in the budget for 2027-28.

STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Agenda Item: Communications Report

Meeting Date: Monday, 16 November 2026

Contact Officer: Communications and Community Engagement Officer

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

Background

This report brings together news on progress of agreed projects and some suggestions to make the Council more accessible and inclusive.

Current Situation

2027 Spring Newsletter and Survey

While the newsletter will be ready to go in February, it will be reliant on budgetary information as this is one of the major content pieces, along with the residents' survey.

It may then be too late to include any information for recruiting councillors or advertising the Annual Town Meeting so members are asked to consider what other information they might like to include on the front and back pages, between a third and a half page on each.

Community Voices/Voice of Witney engagement

Background and proposed approach

The Council's Community Voice Panel is an existing project which, despite previous attempts to establish it, has never fully gained traction. Councillors have expressed an interest in relaunching the initiative, and with an interested party now coming forward, this presents a timely opportunity to review the original concept and consider how it could be developed into a more effective and accessible way of engaging with residents.

Previous approaches may have created too many perceived barriers to participation, and any relaunch should focus on removing as many of these as possible. Rather than relying on residents to proactively sign up, a more targeted approach could be adopted, actively seeking to engage with groups and communities whose views are not routinely heard through existing consultation methods.

Some initial steps have already been taken in this direction. The Talking News organisation has been approached and has agreed to meet to discuss potential partnership opportunities and how they might become more involved in helping the Council reach and engage with a wider range of residents, especially those with visual impairment, in a more accessible way.

Consideration should also be given to making participation as anonymous and informal as possible, reducing any concerns about sharing views directly with the Council. For example, participants could receive a dedicated email, similar to the Council's weekly roundup, containing a single question or short discussion topic rather than lengthy or multiple surveys. A 'Question of the Month' approach could provide a simple, regular opportunity for residents to contribute and this should be a reciprocal arrangement and enable them to ask questions of their own.

Engagement methods should also reflect the needs of different groups. Online meetings, for example, may offer a more accessible way for some residents to participate, particularly those with caring responsibilities or limited availability to attend in person. Targeted engagement could include parents and carers, younger residents, LGBTQ+ communities, people with disabilities, and other groups whose experiences and perspectives may be less well represented in the Council's usual feedback mechanisms.

The overall aim should be to create a flexible, low-pressure and inclusive way of hearing from a wider cross-section of Witney's population, rather than simply establishing a panel of residents who are already confident and motivated to engage with the Council.

Town Guide (Biannual)

Officers are making arrangements to meet with the editors to discuss and progress the next edition.

This would also be a good opportunity for Councillors to consider what information they would like included and whether there is scope to make better use of the publication as a Welcome to Witney guide. By including more useful information about the town, its services, facilities and community organisations, we could help make it a publication that is of value not only to existing residents but also to people who are new to Witney.

Witney Wayfinding Interactive Map

West Oxfordshire District Council has awarded the contract for the development of the interactive town map and established a working group comprising District and Town Council officers, together with representatives from the Chamber of Commerce. An initial scoping meeting has taken place, and the appointed supplier will now work with the group over the coming weeks to develop the map and agree the information that will be included.

From the Town Council's perspective, the project represents a positive example of collaborative partnership working. Once completed, the map will provide an accessible way for residents and visitors to discover local attractions, heritage assets, points of interest, community facilities, and upcoming events, helping to promote the town and support local engagement and tourism which will be embedded on the town council and Chambers' websites.

Corporate Strategy

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

2. An Engaged & Supported Community

Impact Assessments

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

a) Equality – The Council's communications activity seeks to minimise equality risks by using a mix of digital and non-digital channels to reach residents of different ages, abilities, and circumstances. The availability of the Communications Preference Survey in both paper and online formats helps to reduce digital exclusion, particularly for older residents and those without regular internet access. Efforts are also being made to reach the less-heard 18–30 age group by targeting engagement at the Carnival and identifying other suitable opportunities to involve younger residents. The proposed Community Voices initiative will further support this by seeking to engage groups whose views may not routinely be heard through the Council's existing consultation methods.

b) Biodiversity – No direct impact on biodiversity is anticipated from the communications work or production of printed materials.

c) Crime & Disorder – Improved communication and community engagement may contribute to greater awareness of community activities, local services, and opportunities to get involved. This can help support community cohesion and a stronger sense of belonging, although no direct impact on crime and disorder is anticipated.

d) Environment & Climate Emergency – While print production has some environmental impact, efforts will be made to minimise waste, use sustainable materials where possible and promote digital communication channels in line with the Council's Climate Emergency declaration. A balance will be maintained to ensure that residents who cannot or prefer not to access information digitally are not excluded.

Risk

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

There are no significant risks arising directly from the communication activities outlined in this report. However, there is a risk that relying too heavily on digital communication or traditional consultation methods may mean some sections of the community are not reached or represented. This will be mitigated by continuing to use a range of communication channels and exploring more targeted and accessible approaches to engagement.

Social Value

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

The communications activities outlined in this report aim to create social value by improving access to information, encouraging participation, and giving residents more opportunities to have their say.

Particular emphasis is being placed on reaching groups who may not traditionally engage with the Council, helping to ensure that a wider range of views and experiences can inform its work.

Better communication also supports community involvement, local identity and a stronger connection between residents and the Council.

Financial implications

There are no significant financial implications arising directly from this report. Any costs associated with the proposed initiatives, including the production of printed materials, a town guide or additional engagement activities, will be considered as the projects develop and reported through the appropriate budgetary processes.

Recommendations

Member are invited to note the report and;

1. Consider what additional content they would like included in the 2027 Spring Newsletter, particularly if there is insufficient time to include information about Councillor recruitment and the Annual Town Meeting.
2. Support the proposed approach to developing the Community Voices initiative, with a focus on making engagement more accessible, informal, and representative of a wider cross-section of Witney's residents.
3. Consider what information they would like to see included in the first edition of the Town Guide.
4. Note the update concerning the Witney Wayfinding Interactive Map.

WITNEY
TOWN COUNCIL

Date	Story	Reported in	Positive	Negative	Neutral	PR Issued	From WTC Social Media Post	News Article Page	Enquiry Response
18 September 2026	Historic Witney chapel welcomes crowds for heritage event	Witney Gazette, Good Morning Oxfordshire, Oxford Mail	Yes			No	Yes	https://www.witneygazette.co.uk/news/26558556.historic-witney-chapel-welcomes-crowds-heritage/	
18 September 2026	West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2043 open for public feedback	Witney Gazette			Yes	No	Yes	https://www.witneygazette.co.uk/news/26563505.west-oxfordshire-local-plan-2043-open-public-feedback/	
24 September 2026	Schools praised for award-winning gardens	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail	Yes			No	Yes		
24 September 2026	Eco Fair to bring green ideas to town	Witney Gazette	Yes			No	Yes		
25 September 2026	Witney town centre will be 'beautiful' after £4.4m revamp, says Councillor	Oxford Mail	Yes			No	No	https://uk.news.yahoo.com/witney-town-centre-beautiful-4-150000273.html	
27 September 2026	Relief at plan for crossing on 'dangerous' Oxfordshire road	Witney Gazette	Yes			No	No	https://www.witneygazette.co.uk/news/26568338.relief-plan-crossing-dangerous-oxfordshire-road/	
10 October 2026	Witney mayor celebrates community spirit with local events	Oxford Mail, yahoo!news	Yes			No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/26619360.witney-mayor-celebrates-community-spirit-local-events/	
11 October 2026	Witney Town Council wins Cemetery of the Year Silver Award	Oxford Mail, Witney Gazette	Yes			No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/26624479.witney-town-council-wins-cemetery-year-silver-award/	
11 October 2026	Witney awards nominations open to honour community heroes	thisisoxfordshire	Yes			No	Yes	https://www.thisisoxfordshire.co.uk/news/26615734.witney-awards-nominations-open-honour-community-heroes/	
21 October 2026	Witney venues install sanitary bins in men's toilets	Oxford Mail	Yes			Yes	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/26653708.witney-venues-install-sanitary-bins-mens-toilets/	
22 October 2026	Santa's Grotto Witney: Advent Fayre 29 Nov, Millets £29.50	Witney News	Yes			No	No	https://witneynews.co.uk/santas-grotto-witney/	
24 October 2026	Council wins top environment award for nature and climate change work	Oxford Mail, Yahoo!news	Yes			No	Yes	https://uk.news.yahoo.com/council-wins-top-environment-award-040000465.html	
24 October 2026	Witney clubhouse refurbishment delay as contractors scrapped	Oxford Mail		Yes		No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/26667105.witney-clubhouse-refurbishment-delay-contractors-scrapped/	
25 October 2026	Witney Community Window showcases two local groups	Oxford Mail	Yes			No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/26665243.witney-community-window-showcases-two-local-groups/	
26 October 2026	Christmas in Oxfordshire	Oxfordshire Monthly	Yes			No	No	https://www.oxfordshiremonthly.co.uk/guides/christmas-in-oxfordshire-market-towns-2026	
29 October 2026	Council statement after 'inaccurate' comments on Oxfordshire games area	Oxford Mail, yahoo!news			Yes	No	Yes	https://uk.news.yahoo.com/council-statement-inaccurate-comments-oxfordshire-123000849.html	

Date	Story	Reported in	Positive	Negative	Neutral	PR Issued	From WTC Social Media Post	News Article Page	Enquiry Response
30 October 2026	Witney allotments get new shed as seasonal work begins	Oxford Mail	Yes			No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/26682116.witney-allotments-get-new-shed-seasonal-work-begins/	
1st November 2026	Witney roads to close for emergency works until November	Oxford Mail			Yes	No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/26676669.witney-roads-close-emergency-works-november/	
04 November 2026	Witney residents can meet Councillors at Saturday drop-in	Oxford Mail	Yes			No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/26694208.witney-residents-can-meet-councillors-saturday-drop-in/	
07 November 2026	Witney residents invited to nominate community heroes	Oxford Mail			Yes	No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/26694196.witney-residents-invited-nominate-community-heroes/	
08 November 2026	Witney council worker celebrated for 30 years of service	Oxford Mail	Yes			No	Yes	https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/26694213.witney-council-worker-celebrated-30-years-service/	

Oxford Mail
Witney Gazette

A weekly roundup of social media activity is sent to the Council's press contacts. Individual Press Releases will still be issued for key Council news.

A number of new online news websites have appeared in recent months, potentially as a result of the increased use of artificial intelligence in content creation. Officers are monitoring these outlets to assess their credibility and the accuracy of any reporting based on the Council's social media content. As these organisations are actively reporting on Council matters, they will continue to be included within media monitoring reports at this time.

The websites currently identified are:

Witney News
Oxfordshire Monthly
Good Morning Oxfordshire
Oxford Chronicle

STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Agenda Item:	Youth Council Update
Meeting Date:	Monday, 16 November 2026
Contact Officer:	Admin Assistant – Communications & Engagement

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

Background

Witney Youth Council was established in September 2024 with a group of 12 members. Since its formation, the Youth Council has actively participated in town events, including the Christmas Lights Switch-on and Witney Carnival, given feedback on Town Council projects and services, and encouraged to use their voice in local government.

The primary purpose of Witney Youth Council is to provide children and young people with a collective voice that can be heard by decision makers. In doing so, Witney Youth Council supports more inclusive and responsive local government, encourages active participation, and helps develop key skills among young people in Witney.

Current Situation

A Slice of Politics

The Witney Youth Council event, A Slice of Politics, has been postponed to February Half-term after the coinciding of the next Oxfordshire County Council Pizza & Politics event. This decision was made with the Youth Council Chair and Town Council Officers, to avoid confusion between the events and to ensure maximum attendance.

Youth Councillors have many ideas of promotion options, features and activities during the event, including usage of the screen and background music, which this additional preparation time will allow for full attention to.

Meeting Attendance

Witney Youth Council currently have a core group of 9 members; however many meetings see apologies of typically around 6 members (selection varies). This means many meetings are unable to meet quorum.

In order to improve this, the Chair suggested that after 3 attendances of a youth council event (or support of WTC event), the member can receive a Witney Youth Council-branded baseball cap and a certificate confirming their membership.

Business Name	Business 1	Business 2	Business 3
Product Photo			
Price for 6 hats embroidered	£72 (£12 each)	£46.92 (£7.82 each)	£41.94 (£6.99 each)
Price for 6 hats printed	£72 (£12 each)	£28.92 (£4.82 each)	£36.94 (£6.16 each)

Councillors are invited to advise on the idea, and if approved, what business and type of customisation they feel is best for the cost.

The previous Treasurer had to step down from the youth council due to increased volunteering commitments. Officers asked for any feedback, and he said he truly enjoyed his time at the youth council, however perhaps more regular dates of meetings may be easier for members to keep track of. This improvement of consistent meeting dates was implemented in August.

Agendas Posted to Social Media

To encourage more applications, social media posts of the upcoming meeting agendas are now being posted ahead of each meeting to promote the Witney Youth Council.



Figure 1 Screenshot of the post in October

Remembrance Attendance

Witney Youth Councillors laid a wreath during the annual Remembrance Service. This is always a special opportunity for them and it's great to see them representing the young people of Witney.

Annual Youth Council Meeting

The October Youth Council meeting saw the Chair staying the same and the media officer and treasurer changing. This was then confirmed in the November meeting.

Dates of Future Meetings

The Youth Council Chair requested more consistent meeting dates to better fit members' schedules. Following discussion and a vote at the August Youth Council meeting, meetings will now take place on either the first or second Thursday of each month. The upcoming Youth Council meeting dates are as follows:

- Thursday 3 December 2026 - 4pm to 5pm
- Thursday 14 January 2027 - 4pm to 5pm
- Thursday 11 February 2027 - 4pm to 5pm

Corporate Strategy

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

2. An Engaged & Supported Community

Impact Assessments

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

a) Equality – Witney Youth Council inherently supports equality by giving a voice and platform to young people, including those from diverse communities. Many of the issues Youth Councillors wish to address involve discrimination.
b) Biodiversity – The Youth Council has begun to show interest in climate initiatives, although specific plans to support Witney's green spaces have not yet been discussed.
c) Crime & Disorder – Helping young people feel listened to through avenues such as a Youth Council can help reduce anti-social behaviour and crime among young people by promoting mental health awareness, supporting peer-led activities and initiatives, and improving perceptions of young people in Witney.
d) Environment & Climate Emergency – When Witney Youth Council purchases items for its projects, officers prioritise sustainability and the use of eco-friendly materials.

Risk

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

Social Value

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

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

Financial implications

- Officer working time.
- Additional internal hall hire and costs relating to Corn Exchange bookings for Youth Council meetings and events, including the proposed “Politics and Pizza”/“A Slice of Politics” event. This is intended to be funded from the Youth Council budget line 4103/408.

Recommendations

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

1. That, the report be considered and noted.

WITNEY
TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of Witney Youth Council held at 4.00 pm on Thursday 5 November 2026 in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney.

Youth Councillors Present:
Four Youth Councillors

Witney Town Council Mentors Present:
Cllr S Simpson

Witney Town Council Officers Present:
A Hathaway – Admin Assistant for Communications and Engagement

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The Town Councillors present attended as Youth Council mentors to provide guidance and answer questions. Officers advised Members that the Youth Council provided an opportunity for young people in Witney to be heard and that the Town Council would support their ideas and suggestions where possible.

1. **Apologies**
   Apologies were noted from one Youth Councillor.

2. **Declarations of Interest**
   There were no declarations of interest in any of the items under consideration at this meeting.

3. **Minutes**
   The minutes of the meeting held on 3 September 2026 were signed as a correct record.

4. **Guest Participation**
   No members of the public were present who wished to address the Youth Council.

5. **Youth Council Roles**
   Roles for the forthcoming Youth Council year were discussed and confirmed.

6. **A Slice of Politics – Witney Youth Council Event**
   Youth Councillors noted the report from the Admin Assistant and the amended date.

7. **Witney Youth Council Baseball Caps**
   Members agreed to purchase baseball caps for Youth Councillors to earn after attending three Youth Council events, as proposed at the previous meeting. To conserve the Youth Council budget, Members preferred the lowest-cost option: six grey caps printed by Business 2. The colour logo option was the chosen design.

8. **Remembrance Wreath Laying**
   Youth Councillors agreed that the Media Officer would join the Chair in laying the wreath and noted the event details.

9. **Town Councillor Interviews**

Members received information about potential interviews with Town Councillors and agreed that they would like to be involved. The Treasurer proposed bringing in a countdown timer she had at home so that the videos could take the form of an interactive game, with Town Councillors answering questions within a set time. Other Members agreed with the proposal.

The Chair confirmed she would be happy to be in the video(s).

Resolved: That, the Communications and Community Engagement Officer set a date and time for filming and communicate these details to Members through the Admin Assistant.

10. **Meeting with Charlie Maynard MP**

Youth Councillors considered meeting with the MP to discuss proposed social media restrictions and concluded that such a meeting was not currently a priority.

11. **Items for Future Agenda**

The Youth Council Treasurer proposed a small trail or treasure hunt activity in which Members would hide small reindeer or sheep figures and residents would be given a leaflet to find them, similar to the York Ghost Hunt.

Proposed outline:

Small sheep figurines would be hidden or displayed at selected locations around Witney. Participants would follow a free trail map to find them.

Participants would:

1. Collect or download a free trail map at the Corn Exchange, with a suggested donation towards the Witney Youth Council event in February.
2. Visit participating locations around Witney.
3. Find the sheep and complete the associated challenge. (either 1. take one home – and only one! – or 2. count and try to find as many as you can)
4. Submit a completed trail sheet, if applicable.
5. Receive a small certificate or enter a free prize draw.

The event would need to take place during daylight hours, between 12 noon and 2 pm and no promotion will be needed as it will be a pop-up event during the Christmas holiday.

Further details would be discussed at the next Youth Council meeting on 3 December 2026.

Resolved: That, the Youth Council Admin Assistant design a draft leaflet for distribution.

That, the Youth Council Admin Assistant collate options for wooden or eco-friendly lamb figures to be hidden as part of the trail, for a decision at the next meeting.

12. **Dates of Future Meetings**

The dates of future meetings were noted:

- Thursday 3 December 2026
- Thursday 14 January 2027
- Thursday 11 February 2027

The meeting closed at 4.58 pm.

STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Agenda Item: Youth Services

Meeting Date: Monday, 16 November 2026

Contact Officer: Deputy Town Clerk

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on Youth Services being funded by or with the involvement of the Town Council.

Current Situation

The Station - Detached Youth

The report from The Station in accordance with Section 11 (Quality & Review) of the Service Level Agreement (SLA) between Bright Futures Oxon and the Town Council which is attached as **Appendix A**.

Following an update meeting between The Station and Town Council officers, information was provided on a range of successful recent events, including KICK, BREAK and SPARK. Members will note that use of The Leys for KICK sessions during the summer holidays proved more effective than the previous venue, offering improved functionality, higher levels of engagement, and greater opportunities for collaboration with other organisations, such as Courtside Hubs.

The Station is therefore seeking permission to hold its Spring BREAK and KICK programmes at The Leys in 2027 and beyond, excluding areas affected by the planned sports pitch renovation works.

APCAM

The organisation delivered a successful programme of summer drop-in sessions and outreach activities, providing early intervention and ongoing support to local families facing a range of challenges, including educational disengagement, domestic abuse recovery, housing needs, and special educational need. Full response details on the sessions and the organisations future work can be seen in the attached **Appendix B**.

In addition, APCAM has submitted an application seeking £2,450 to deliver five free We Game inclusive gaming drop-in sessions for young people in Witney during the 2027 school holidays.

The application is attached as **Appendix C**. The Committee is invited to consider whether it wishes to make a recommendation to the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee at its meeting on 23 November regarding this request.

Summer Youth Activities Feedback

The Administrative Support Assistant – Communications & Engagement has sought feedback from local partners and community organisations to assess the impact and value of the Town Council's Young Persons Summer Activity List and to ensure that officer time devoted to its production is providing a meaningful benefit.

Although responses have been limited, social media analytics have been gathered and are provided for information at **Appendix D**. Based on the available evidence, it is considered that the Summer Activity List continues to provide value and should therefore be maintained.

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. An Engaged & Supported Community

Impact Assessments

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

a) Equality – the provision of free to access to services.
b) Biodiversity – no direct implications.
c) Crime & Disorder – the provision of youth services is aimed at reducing anti-social behaviour.
d) Environment & Climate Emergency – no direct implications.

Risk

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

The Council must ensure it is receiving value for money in the services it commissions or any group it enters into a partnership with to mitigate against both financial and reputational risk.

Social Value

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

The social value of services and support (via The Station's detached youth work and Young Person Mental Health drop-in sessions) should be considered. Support contributes to young people being able to live fulfilling lives.

Financial Implications

- The cost of the proposed We Game sessions is £2,450.
- The charge for APCAM mental health drop-in sessions for the current year was £2,250.
- Neither of these services are covered under Council budget lines.
- The Policy, Governance & Finance Committee ringfenced £3,500 of the unspent youth services grant budget for future youth-related applications during the municipal year.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and,

1. Note the six-monthly report of The Station and consider the organisation's request to use the Leys for BREAK in May 2027 and KICK in July/August 2027.
2. Note the update from APCAM on summer mental health drop-in sessions and consider whether these should continue and therefore be budgeted for in 2027-28.
3. Consider whether to make a recommendation to the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee on the APCAM application for We Game sessions in 2027.
4. Note the Summer Youth Activities List feedback/analytics and intention to continue providing the list annually.

From: Lauren Jacobs - APCAM [redacted]
Sent: 08 October 2026 11:16
To: Adam Clapton <adam.clapton@witney-tc.gov.uk>
Subject: Re: Witney Summer Mental Health Drop-ins Update

Hi Adam,

We had another really successful summer with drop in's, seeing on average 3 different families every week. This has led to further intervention with a family who are completely disengaged from education, we have continued to support for EHCP/ EHNA for the young person and working to support a specific suitable placement. We are also supporting Mum who has come from an abusive relationship to not only deal with her own trauma as well as supporting the young person.

[redacted] lso provided on the spot immediate therapeutic support for another family who have also gone on to attend our weekly parent support sessions.

We have also had load of really positive feedback from sofa in the street which we were really thankful to have been able to do outside of the Corn Exchange; we have formed therapeutic relationships with a number of the families that attended, working to support one family who need full support including supporting housing applications and interventions with their young person. Another family who have been regularly attending WeGame monthly and they also attended all of the Summer Sessions - forming a really lovely relationship with [redacted] our Youth Worker - and I am working with Mum to support the young person who struggles in school and has to be on a reduced timetable and will probably need a specialist provision moving in to KS2.

As an update from us as an organisation - we have also had investment from WODC which has enabled us to train two youth workers with Oxfordshire Youth, as well as Digital Youth Work with NYA. We are also undertaking training to Sanctuary Seekers. Migrants and Unaccompanied Minors, which starts this week.

Again apologies for the delay!

WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

Grant-aid to Local Organisations
APPLICATION FORM

(PLEASE COMPLETE THE FORM IN BLOCK CAPITALS)

(1) Your Organisation

Name of Organisation	APCAM		
Registered Address*	1 THE GREEN, ALVESCOT		
BAMPTON, OXFORDSHIRE			
Post Code	OX18 2QD	Tel No.	SEE PAGE 3*
Contact Name	LAUREN RIDLEY		
Position in Organisation	CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER (CEO) (i.e. Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary)		
Registered Charity	**YES**	Registration No.	1186256

What are the activities and/or aims of the organisation:

APCAM is a small Charitable Incorporated Organisation, founded in 2019, which supports children, young people and families across West Oxfordshire who are affected by mental health difficulties, special educational needs and disabilities, and disengagement from education.

We do this through three connected services, all free to families. Our therapeutic service offers trauma-informed, SEND-trained child and adolescent counsellors. Our parent and family support service helps families secure suitable education, navigate EHCPs and alternative provision, and access benefits and housing support. Our youth and outreach work includes WeGame, our inclusive gaming programme.

Working from Carterton Family Centre and Witney Corn Exchange alongside schools, Early Help and the local authority, we aim to promote young people's mental wellbeing, to secure suitable and accessible education for every young person, and to reduce isolation and promote inclusion for those with SEND or sensory needs, those who identify as LGBTQ+ and those disengaged from education.

(2) Membership

How many members do you have?	No paid membership; as a CIO our members are our trustees.
Approximately how many of your members live in Witney?	Many of the families we support.
Is membership restricted in any way?	No. Free and open to all families.
What is your annual subscription, if any?	None. All APCAM services are free.
Are you affiliated to a national organisation? If so, which one?	No.
Local venue/meeting place	Witney Corn Exchange and Carterton Family Centre

(3) Grants

Purpose for which the grant is required:

We are asking for funding to deliver five free WeGame inclusive gaming drop-in sessions for young people in Witney during the 2027 school holidays: one in the Easter holidays, three across the summer holidays and one in the October half term. Each session runs for four hours on a Monday, avoiding bank holidays, and is led by two experienced APCAM youth workers, with additional kit hired in for each session.

Proposed dates (Oxfordshire school holidays 2027)
Easter: Monday 5 April 2027
Summer: Monday 26 July, Monday 9 August and Monday 23 August 2027
October half term: Monday 25 October 2027

Costs
Youth workers: 2 workers x 4 hours x £30 per hour = £240 per session x 5 sessions = £1,200
Kit hire: £250 per session x 5 sessions = £1,250

Total: £2,450 (£490 per session)

Amount of grant applied for	£ **2,450**

Has your organisation previously applied to the Town Council for a grant?	**YES**
If YES please give details	Previous funding for youth services

Have you applied for a grant to any other body or organisation?	**YES**
If YES please give details	West Oxfordshire Youth Partnership funded three WeGame summer sessions at Carterton Family Centre in 2026 (£1,656), which reached 37 young people. WeGame's regular programme is supported by the National Lottery Community Fund (Awards for All) and Cottsway provides core funding for our service. We also have applications submitted or in preparation with Oxfordshire Community Foundation, Carterton Town Council and the National Lottery Community Fund for other areas of our work. **None of these cover the Witney holiday sessions in this application.**

(4) Financial

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.

As a small CIO, APCAM is not required to have audited accounts. Our latest annual accounts, as filed with the Charity Commission, are enclosed. In our most recent financial year we operated with a surplus and no long-term liabilities. Our 2025/26 accounts will be filed by 27 February 2027 and we are happy to share them once complete.

(5) Fundraising

What fundraising events or activities will your organisation be holding this year?

Alongside trust and foundation applications, APCAM raises funds through regular monthly giving by Direct Debit and online donations through JustGiving. WeGame also contributes to our sustainability: any surplus it generates is donated back to APCAM to fund therapy hours for young people. At WeGame sessions we run a small tuck shop at a nominal charge that simply covers its costs, so that it stays affordable for every family.

(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.

WeGame uses gaming as an incluisve, supervised way to reduce isolation and build social confidence among young people experiencing mental health challenges, SEND or social anxiety, and those who identify as LGBTQ+. School holidays are when these young people are most at risk of withdrawing, because routine disappears and free provision that suits them is very hard to find.

Our three summer 2026 sessions in Carterton reached 37 young people - during the heat wave! - with a number of families attending every session, and two families who first came to us through WeGame have since gone on to receive support from APCAM's wider service. As one parent told us, "I wish we had found this earlier, G has never engaged with other young people like this."

This grant would bring the same open-access offer to young people in Witney across the year's school holidays rather than in the summer alone. Sessions are free, need no referral or registration, and are run by youth workers young people already know and trust. We will acknowledge Witney Town Council's support on all session publicity, on our website and social media, and in our annual report, and we would be glad to share a short feedback report with the Council after the final session.

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.

Signed: [redacted]	Date: 27/10/2026

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.	

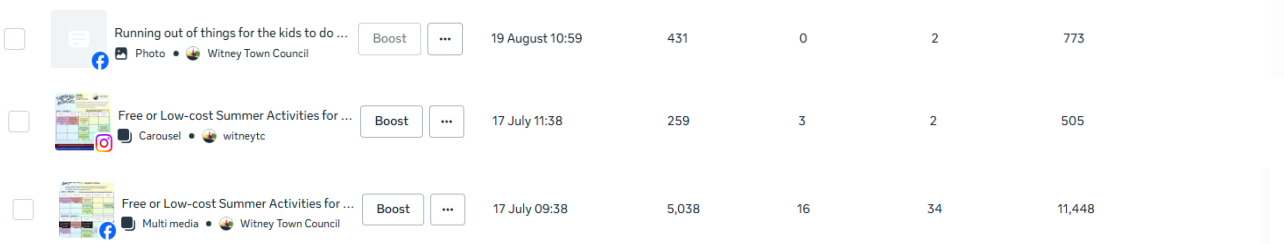
Summer Activity Posts 2026 – Data Gathering

Contents (ctrl + click)

- Screenshots from Social Media Analytics
- Comparison of Witney Town Council Social Media Posts: 2026 and Previous Years
- Comparison with Other Councils' Summer Activity Posts in 2026
- Complimentary Comments from previous years
- Conclusion

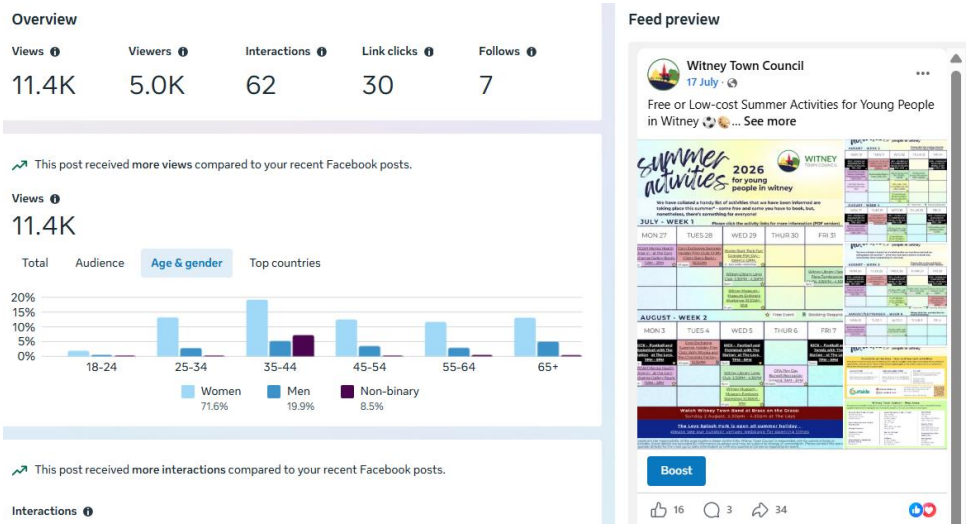
Screenshots from Social Media Analytics

2026 Posts (Reach/Link Clicks/Shares/Views)

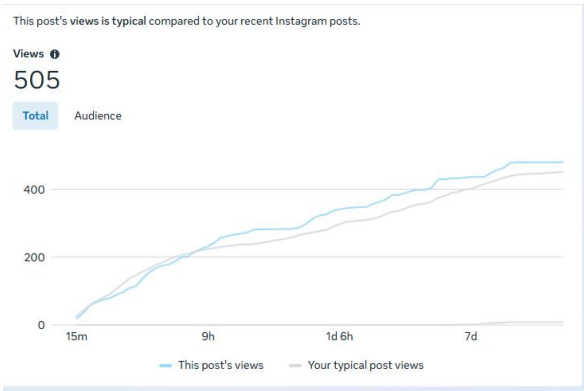


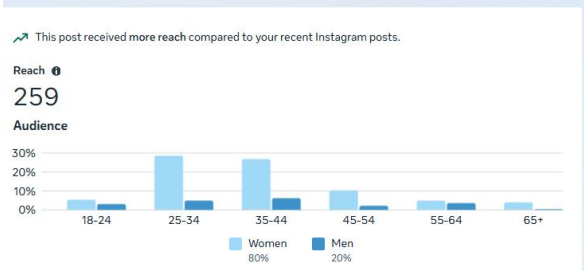
Running out of things for the kids to do ... Photo • Witney Town Council	Boost	19 August 10:59	431	0	2	773
Free or Low-cost Summer Activities for ... Carousel • witneytc	Boost	17 July 11:38	259	3	2	505
Free or Low-cost Summer Activities for ... Multi media • Witney Town Council	Boost	17 July 09:38	5,038	16	34	11,448

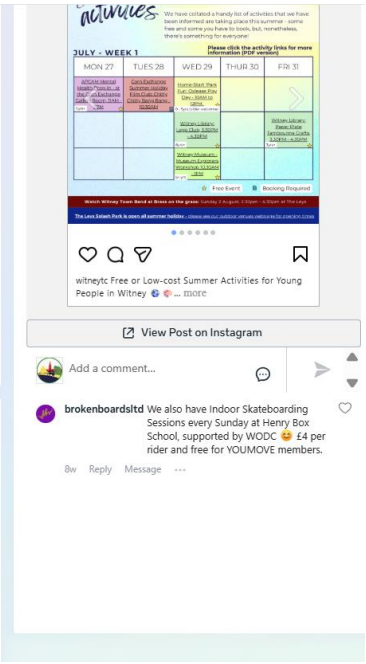
2026 Facebook Post Analytics + Demographic



2026 Instagram Post Analytics + Demographic







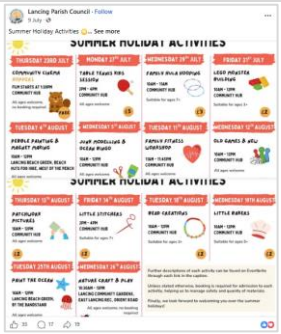
Comparison of Witney Town Council Social Media Posts: 2026 and Previous Years

Year	Number of posts (fb + ig)	Total views*	Shares on initial Facebook post
2026	3	12,978	34
2025	5	13,670	25
2024	1	Unknown	43
2023	1	Unknown	24

*Includes follow-up promotional posts. The average WTC post on Facebook receives approx. 4000 views. *23/24 views are unknown due to a change in 2025 on how Meta calculates analytics*

Comparison with Other Councils' Summer Activity Posts in 2026

All posts below were published in July 2026.

South Derbyshire District Council	**Lancing Parish Council**	**Dunstable Town Council**	**Calne Town Council**
11 shares (population approximately 100,000)	19 shares (population approximately 20,000)	9 shares (population approximately 40,000)	19 shares (population approximately 20,000)
			

Only a limited number of comparable council posts featuring a summer activity timetable could be found.

Complimentary Comments from previous years

2025 From: **The Family Ticket**

- "@**Bicester Town Council Events & News** Look how helpful this is. 👀hint hint"

2024 From **Lyn Mahoney**

- "Useful and good to see free things too"

Conclusion

The audience was predominantly females aged from their mid-twenties to mid-forties. This profile broadly aligns with adults of parenting age and suggests that the content successfully reached people likely to be seeking affordable activities for children and young people within their households.

Overall, the available comparison indicates that Witney Town Council achieved stronger engagement with its summer activities list than the other councils reviewed. With this level of engagement plus capturing a demographic the town council sometimes find difficult to engage (25-45), it would be safe to assume these posts are worth putting together and publishing in future years.

STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Agenda Item: Vehicle Activated Signs (VAS)

Meeting Date: Monday, 16 November 2026

Contact Officer: Deputy Town Clerk

The purpose of this report is to consider potential Town Council investment in speed awareness signs for Witney.

Background

The Committee previously considered requests for additional Vehicle Activated Signs (VAS) and Speed Indicator Devices (SID) within the town on 17 November 2025 (minute no. SC661 refers).

Members considered that an audit of existing signs should be undertaken by Oxfordshire County Council (OCC), alongside an assessment of traffic impacts arising from the opening of the Shores Green junction and the associated rerouting of the A4095. It was agreed that the findings of this work should be shared with the Witney Traffic Advisory Committee and that consideration of any further VAS or SID provision should be deferred and re-considered in December 2026.

Current Situation

The above review has been brought forward to align with the Council's budget-setting process for 2027/28 and to consider a potential funding contribution towards the installation of a VAS in East Witney.

The matter was also considered by the Witney Traffic Advisory Committee on 20 January 2026 (Minute No. T11 refers). Members should note that Oxfordshire County Council has advised that the purchase and installation of speed-related signs must be funded by the relevant town or parish council. In addition, Thames Valley Police has confirmed that, in line with its current policies, it does not routinely enforce 20mph speed limits and Witney Town Community Speedwatch only has limited resources to facilitate sessions.

Collision data can be seen via the following link requested at Full Council on 12 October 2026 (minute no. 522) in relation to a review of 20mph speed limits. Collision Data Witney can be seen by zooming in on the map. Speed data was also requested for: Woodstock Road, Hailey Road, Newland/Oxford Hill, Bridge Street, Burford Road, Deer Park Road, and Curbridge Road as there appears to be clusters on each. This can be found in **Appendix A.**

Members are invited to consider the Council's position and whether it wishes to support the installation of speed-related signs within the town. Indicative costs provided by County Council officers suggest that a standard fixed sign costs approximately £4,000.

Cllr J. Robertshaw has indicated he is willing to contribute up to £4,000 from his County Councillor Priority Fund towards the installation of a sign on Oxford Hill, Witney, following feedback received at an OCC Localities meeting that a sign would be beneficial in this location. This installation will be subject to a site meeting and agreement with an OCC officer.

Members should note that any grant funding would apply to the initial capital cost only and would not cover future inspection, maintenance, repair, or replacement costs, which would remain the responsibility of the Town Council.

To ensure funding opportunities were not missed, officers have provisionally included this project within the developing Infrastructure Funding Statement and have submitted an application to the Councillor Priority Fund. Should the Committee decide not to proceed, the application will be withdrawn.

Corporate Strategy

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

2. An Engaged and Supported Community

Impact Assessments

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

a) **Equality** – Improved road safety benefits all residents, particularly vulnerable groups such as children, older people, and those with disabilities who may be more at risk from speeding traffic. To maximise inclusivity, sign placement should consider areas with schools, care homes, and pedestrian routes to ensure all groups benefit equally.
b) **Biodiversity** –
c) **Crime & Disorder** – The purchase of fixed and mobile speed awareness signs is likely to have a positive impact on crime and disorder by deterring speeding and promoting safer driving behaviour.
d) **Environment & Climate Emergency** – Fixed and mobile speed awareness signs may encourage slower, smoother driving which could reduce emissions and noise pollution.

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 purchase of fixed and mobile speed awareness signs carries risks relating to cost, maintenance, and public expectations.
- Financial and operational risks include installation, upkeep, compliance with highways regulations, and potential vandalism or equipment failure.
- Reputational risk may occur if the signs are perceived as ineffective or if the Town Council is seen as responsible for speed enforcement, potentially leading to liability concerns in the event of accidents.

These risks could be managed through coordination with Oxfordshire County Council & Thames Valley Police, clear communication with residents, and budgeting for ongoing maintenance to ensure the equipment remains effective.

Social Value

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

Purchasing fixed and mobile speed awareness signs delivers social value by improving road safety, reducing speeding, and increasing residents' sense of security. The signs encourage responsible driving, support walking and cycling, and show the Council's commitment to community wellbeing and responsiveness to local concerns.

Financial Implications

- The town council has no current budget for this infrastructure in 2026-27.
- An offer of grant assistance for one camera in East Witney for up to £4,000 has been made.

Recommendations

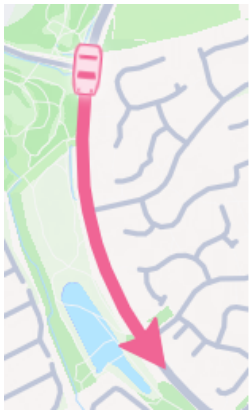
Members are invited to note the report and,

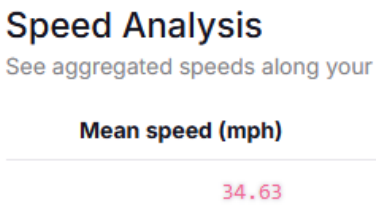
1. Consider whether the Town Council should invest in VAS equipment.
2. If approved, note the offer of funding from Cllr J Robertshaw and approve the application for use of his fund towards a VAS in Oxford Hill Witney.
3. Consider allocating a budget for the 2027-28 fiscal year towards further speed monitoring equipment, if appropriate.

From: Plater, Roger - Oxfordshire County Council
Subject: RE: Request for feedback on 20mph schemes - West Oxfordshire

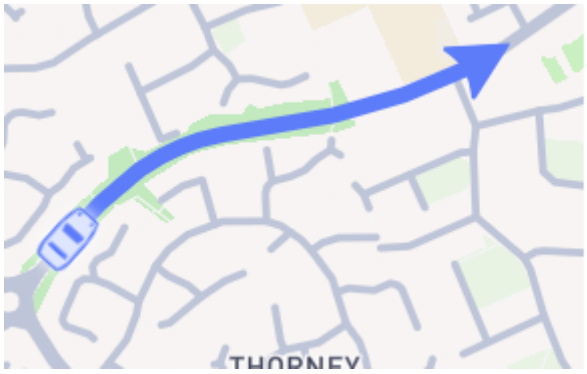
Thanks for sending the list of streets. The data we have access to only goes back to mid-2023 so I am unable to retrieve pre-20mph limit speeds. The data given below is for the latest three-month period.

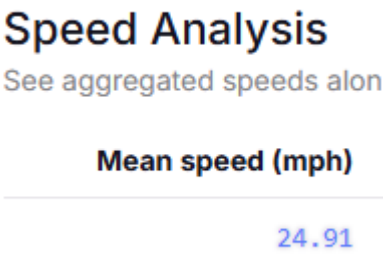
Deer Park Road



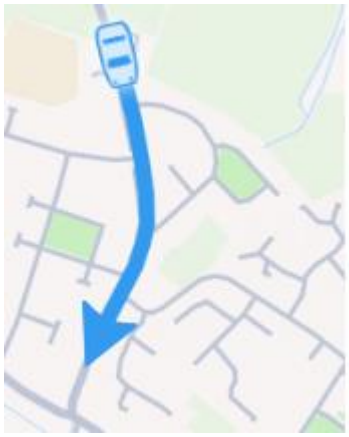


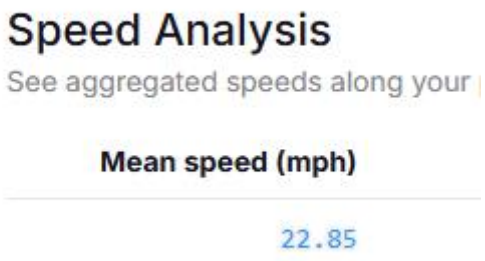
Curbridge Road





Hailey Road





Woodstock Road



Speed Analysis

See aggregated speeds along you

Mean speed (mph)
21.60

Oxford Hill-Newlands



Speed Analysis

See aggregated speeds along

Mean speed (mph)
23.54

Bridge Street



Speed Analysis

See aggregated speeds along you

Mean speed (mph)
18.49

Burford Road



Speed Analysis

See aggregated speeds along your

Mean speed (mph)
34.62

I hope you find this useful, but please get in touch if you need further information.

Kind regards

Roger

Roger Plater

Senior Officer – Vision Zero

Central Programme Delivery

Highway Maintenance

Environment and Highways

Oxfordshire County Council