

**CLIMATE, BIODIVERSITY & PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

Held on Tuesday, 15 November 2022

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

Present:

Councillor R Smith (Chair)

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| Councillors: | A Prosser | L Duncan |
| | T Ashby | V Gwatkin |
| | J Aitman | P Hiles |
| Officers: | Adam Clapton | Deputy Town Clerk |
| | Claire Green | Administration Support - Planning & Stronger Communities |
| | Sharon Groth | Town Clerk |
| | Derek Mackenzie | Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk |
| | Carl Whitehead | Park Ranger |
| Others: | None | |

P579 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

P580 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from members or officers.

P581 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

P582 UPDATE FROM PARK RANGER

With the express permission of the Chair, agenda items 7,9 and 10 were brought up the agenda.

The Committee received the report and verbal update of the Park Ranger.

Members thanked the Park Ranger for the work he has carried out in the past few months since joining the council.

Members heard about the various projects outlined in the report and the Ranger was able to provide proposed costings for each.

Members were all in agreement with the projects to add wildflowers to the two roundabouts either end of Curbridge Road, the engagement of Oxford Brookes University students to carry out Invertebrate studies, the plan to apply for Local Nature Reserve recognition, improvements to the river and lake banks as well as the potential introduction of events at the country park such as QR codes with visitor and nature information and establishing Geocache locations. Approximate costings were provided, and it was agreed the items should be undertaken in a phased approach throughout the year.

The Committee discussed the establishment of a Forest School however they were concerned about possible vandalism, but the Ranger confirmed that most of the equipment such as cooking equipment and ropes are brought in for each session, so little would be left on site. The site would be accessible to all originsations and would re-purpose the area that was previously used by the Wild Witney Group. All Members agreed for this to be established.

Resolved:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, the projects suggested by the Park Ranger should proceed and,.
3. That, un-funded items should be included in the 2023/24 budget.

P583 FINANCE REPORT: REVISED REVENUE BUDGET 2022/23 AND DRAFT BASE REVENUE BUDGET FOR 2023/24

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk/CEO updating on budget spending to date for 2022/23 and items for the 2023/24 draft budget.

Members discussed budget item 4918/800 - Building Energy Efficiency, and agreed technical consultees should be engaged, and reports produced so that the council could create building energy actions plans and be in the best position to make any grant applications that arise. It was advised that grant applications usually have short deadlines to be met and having the reports in hand will assist with the process. The Committee also requested that the £20,000 set aside is rolled over to 2023/24.

The Committee also agreed to rollover the remaining earmarked reserves of £30,000 for Burwell Heating System (372) and £29,200 for Electric Vehicles (370). Members requested that an additional £15,000 is budgeted for Electrical Vehicle and £30,000 for Climate Emergency.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, energy audit reports are commissioned for the councils' buildings and,
3. That, the earmarked reserves are rolled over as stated and,
4. That, additional funds are budgeted for Electrical Vehicles and Climate Emergency

P584 REVENUE GROWTH ITEMS, SPECIAL REVENUE PROJECTS AND CAPITAL PROJECTS

The Committee received the report of the Town Clerk/CEO.

Members, having considered the various projects that the Park Ranger had proposed, and the costs associated with their implementation were pleased that many only had a small capital cost, the substantive one being that of the time of the Ranger and the maintenance team.

The Committee discussed the cost of surveys that the Park Ranger required to allow him to apply for both the Local Nature Reserve (LNR) accreditation and future potential grant applications. These four or five surveys were estimated to cost approx. £5,000 in total and would need to be carried out around May 2023 as this is when wildlife and plant life is active. Members requested this is added to the draft budget as a priority.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the projects suggested by the Park Ranger proceed and,
3. That, £5,000 is budgeted for the commissioning of reports to assist in the LNR accreditation and future grant applications.

The Town Clerk left the meeting at 19:11pm

P585 **PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

The Committee received and considered a schedule of planning applications from West Oxfordshire District Council.

Resolved:

That the comments, as per the attached schedule, be forwarded to West Oxfordshire District Council.

Councillor T Ashby left the meeting at 19:20pm

P586 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Climate Biodiversity & Planning Committee meetings held on 27 September, 4 October, and 25 October 2022 were received.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Climate Biodiversity & Planning Committee meetings held on 27 September, 4 October and 25 October 2022 be approved as a correct record and be signed by the Chair.

P587 **PLANNING DECISIONS**

The Committee received and considered a schedule of planning decisions received from West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC)

The Committee noted that the application for 21 Stanton Harcourt Road was refused by planning officers on conservation issues and its dominant appearance in the existing street scene grounds. Also, the application for 2 Jacobs Close was refused by planning officers on the grounds of its visual appearance within the existing street scene.

Resolved:

That, the list circulated advising of District Council planning decisions be noted.

P588 **WITNEY TRAFFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE MINUTES - 27 SEPTEMBER 2022**

The Committee received the minutes of the Witney Traffic Advisory Committee held on 27 September 2022.

The Deputy Town Clerk gave an update on minute item T46 to say that due to the number of objections to the scheme it is likely not to proceed. This would release around £5,000 of funds pledged by the town council.

Resolved:

1. That, the minutes of the Witney Traffic Advisory Committee held on 27 September be noted and,
2. That, the verbal update of the Deputy Town Clerk be noted.

The meeting closed at: 7.40 pm

Chair