

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

Held on Tuesday, 28 March 2023

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

Present:

Councillor R Smith (Chair)

Councillors:	A Prosser J Aitman L Duncan	V Gwatkin P Hiles
Officers:	Adam Clapton Derek Mackenzie Claire Green Carl Whitehead	Deputy Town Clerk Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk Administration Support - Planning & Stronger Communities Park Ranger
Others:	1 member of the public.	

P173 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors T Ashby & J Aitman.

P174 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from members or officers.

P175 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Committee adjourned for this item.

The committee received representations from a resident of Manor Road in respect of application 23/00689/HHD to be discussed at part of Agenda Item 5.

At the discretion of the Chair planning application 23/00689/HHD was moved up the agenda and discussed after which the member of the public left the meeting.

The Committee reconvened.

P176 MINUTES

The minutes of the Climate, Biodiversity & Planning Committee meetings held on 24 January, 14 February and 7 March were received.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Climate, Biodiversity & Planning Committee meetings held on 24 January, 14 February and 7 March be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

P177 **PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

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

In addition, the Committee also discussed planning application 23/00179/FUL for an Anaerobic Digestion Facility in the neighbouring South Leigh parish.

The Committee objected to the application on grounds of transport, road safety and community benefit.

Resolved:

That, the comments, as per the attached schedule and for 23/00179/FUL, be forwarded to West Oxfordshire District Council.

P178 **PLANNING DECISIONS**

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

Resolved:

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

P179 **WODC - PLANNING VALIDATION CHECKLIST**

The Committee received copies of the new Biodiversity checklist implemented by West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC)

Resolved:

That, that the new Biodiversity checklist be noted.

P180 **NOTIFICATION OF PLANNING APPEAL - 118C QUARRY ROAD**

The Committee received notice of planning appeal APP/D3125/W/22/3309162 – 118C Quarry Road, Witney.

Resolved:

That, the planning appeal decision be noted.

P181 **NOTIFICATION OF PLANNING APPEAL - LAND SOUTHWEST OF DOWNS ROAD, CURBRIDGE BUSINESS PARK, WITNEY**

The Committee received notice of planning appeal APP/D3125/W/22/3307358 – Land Southwest of Downs Road, Curbridge Business Park, Witney.

Resolved:

That, the planning appeal decision be noted.

P182 **APPLICATION FOR A PREMISES LICENCE - 355C THORNEY LEYS, WITNEY**

The Committee received the application from Barry's Food Store, 355C Thorney Leys, Witney for a new premises licence.

Resolved:

That, the Council makes no objection to this application.

P183 **APPLICATION FOR A PREMISES LICENCE - 91 CORN STREET, WITNEY**

The Committee received the application from Green Mobility Limited, 91 Corn Street, Witney for a new premises licence.

Resolved:

That, the Council makes no objection to this application.

P184 **ADDRESS MANAGEMENT - ROAD AT GLENMORE BUSINESS CENTRE, WITNEY**

The Committee received correspondence from West Oxfordshire District Council's address management team.

Members confirmed there were no objections to the proposed name of "Norreys Avenue".

Resolved:

That, the correspondence be noted.

P185 **MANAGEMENT OF WATERCOURSE - SNIPE MEADOW**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Biodiversity Officer.

Members discussed the current impact of the River Windrush and Colwell Brook overtopping their banks during flood events and how this might be prevented to maintain good water quality at Witney Lake. There was the possibility of working with the Environmental Agency (EA) to help alleviate the problem with improved bank maintenance and potential bunds, but this bore significant costs and EA approval was not guaranteed.

Further discussion took place on the wider issue of managing the watercourse over the Council's meadows, neighbouring sites and on contributing to a District Council proposal on how to gain more local autonomy over bank maintenance, with agreement this would be beneficial.

The Committee agreed to the recommendations contained in the report and asked that the Biodiversity Officer prioritised the watercourse stretches requiring the most urgent attention and makes an enquiry to the Environment Agency to ascertain the level of response. Further stretches could then be included in the facility's land management plan and budgeted for accordingly.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, any tree works are to be carried out by the Ranger, the works team and if needed, the Council's preferred tree contractor Town & Country Trees and,
3. That no bank work is to be carried out without exploring the full costs beforehand and,
4. That, the Council reinstates and strengthen the pathway around the lake using binding ballast and,
5. That, the water in the lake be tested to clarify its status and,
6. That, the Biodiversity Officer prioritises the stretches of watercourse banks and enquires to the Environment Agency about the most urgent and,
7. That, the Biodiversity Officer contacts West Oxfordshire District Council regarding the issues of bank works along the watercourse and the difficulty in resolving them.

P186 **OPEN SPACES STRATEGY**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Biodiversity Officer.

Members heard that progress was underway on the action points relating to the Lake, Country Park, and Open Spaces in the Council's adopted Open Spaces Strategy. There was little more that could be done by officers at this point, however the current work would be expanded on, mostly with the help of volunteers in the coming months.

The Committee welcomed the feedback and were pleased to hear the number of volunteers was growing.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the Council has a Tree policy which outlines its strategy going forward.
3. That, the Council has a significant resource, and it needs to be made use of and maintained to facilitate use by as wide a range of users as possible.
4. That, the Lake & Country Park should be promoted as a "health and wellbeing" resource.
5. That, the value of volunteers is enormous in both the output of their work and also more importantly the social interactions and wellbeing created in a like-minded, well-motivated and confidently led team.

P187 **TREESCAPE REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Biodiversity Officer.

Members were presented with a report which was presented to the Council in 2022 which highlighted the Council's current tree and hedging stock and proposals on how these could be increased over the coming years. The report was comprehensive, and officers were able to utilise many aspects in long term management plans and projects, but there were also some aspects which simply would not be possible due to designated land use.

The Committee agreed that officers should explore projects on a case-by-case basis as and when time allowed to bring the proposals, such as a community orchard to fruition. With the right support and resources, the Council could maximise its potential to increase the natural capital of green spaces.

Resolved:

1. That the report be noted and
2. That each area needed to be looked at on a "case by case" basis.

P188 **SWIFT BRICKS**

The Committee received the correspondence from the principal planning policy officer at West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) regarding the consideration of Swift Bricks.

A member also updated that since the correspondence was received on 10 February, discussions have progressed at WODC and that it is an expectation that the use of Swift Bricks will be included in the Local Plan.

Resolved:

That, the correspondence is noted.

P189 **WODC - ELECTRIC VEHICLE (EV) CAR CLUB SCHEME AT WOODFORD WAY**

The Committee were pleased to hear that an opportunity for residents to experience the use of Electric Vehicles (EV) would be possible under this scheme.

A Member had already heard of the news and reported to the committee that the scheme was not yet live on the Enterprise website but looking at other similar schemes in the area it looked very promising. Members were keen to encourage use as there was no known car share scheme in the witney area.

Resolved:

1. That, the council would actively promote the scheme and,
2. That, the council does not have any feedback for WODC regarding the scheme currently.

The meeting closed at: 8.00 pm

Chair