

**STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

Held on Monday, 12 June 2023

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

Present:

Councillor L Cherry (Chair)

Councillors:	O Collins	A Bailey
	J Aitman	G Meadows
	R Smith	J Treloar (In place of J Doughty)
	T Ashby	
Officers:	Adam Clapton	Deputy Town Clerk
	Sharon Groth	Town Clerk
	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
	Mark Lewis	Head of Estates & Operations
Others:	1 member of the public.	

SC286 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor J Doughty.

SC287 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from members or officers.

SC288 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

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

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

Resolved:

That, Councillor Georgia Meadows be elected Vice-Chair of the Committee for the 2023/2024 municipal year.

SC289 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Stronger Communities committee held on 20 March 2023 were received.

SC 152 - A Member expressed their thanks to everyone involved in the success of the Coronation weekend activities.

SC 149 – At a Member's request officers confirmed a display to commemorate the town's links to the HMP Windrush ship was ready and would be made available at the Corn Exchange from Windrush Day, 22 June 2023.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Stronger Communities committee held on 20 March 2023 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the chair.

Councillor A Bailey joined the meeting at 18.04pm.

SC290 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Committee adjourned for this item.

The Committee received representations from Susann Haehnel, Oxfordshire Country Council Targeted Youth Support Service Manager concerning Agenda Item 13. Members were advised of the work of the Youth Support team and the current situation with services in Witney and West Oxfordshire.

Members asked a number of questions in order to gain further understanding of the support which could be provided, ages supported and the current waiting list.

The Committee thanked Susan for her time and the work already carried out by her team and extended an invitation to the two youth workers that cover Witney to attend a future meeting.

The Committee reconvened.

SC291 YOUTH SERVICES GRANT 2023

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 received the report of the Deputy Town Clerk outlining the Youth Services Grant due to open for applications in August 2023.

Following the cessation of Got2B and the approach of the summer holiday period, Members agreed there was a need to be prepared to accept earlier grant requests in order to support young people that were losing this vital resource.

Members were in favour of a strategic meeting with the Oxfordshire County Council Youth Support Service, all authority Councillors, stakeholders and representatives to try and find a solution to the pressing and future needs; this would ensure funding was used wisely from varying sources.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and,

2. That, funds are made available from the Youth Services Grant to provide a youth service in Witney during the summer holidays and,
3. That, this be considered at the meeting of Policy, Governance & Finance Committee on 19th June.

The member of the public left the meeting.

SC292 COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Committee received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk along with the Committee's current terms of reference.

The Deputy Town Clerk advised that there was no mention of "Youth Services" and all Members agreed it was important to include and asked that it be added as an additional point.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the Committee terms of reference be agreed and published including the following amendment to term a) To recognise the value and benefit of voluntary groups and endeavours within our community, including provision of youth services, supporting and helping to facilitate where possible.

SC293 COMMITTEE OBJECTIVES AND WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk/C.E.O. concerning its objectives and work programme for the forthcoming year.

Members discussed the provision for bins, particularly the inclusion of dog waste bins to maintain a good appearance on council land. The Deputy Town Clerk confirmed the Council's bin policy which had been agreed in 2022 and noted that additional bins on Town Council land could be considered.

In addition to reviving an Inclusivity & Diversity Panel, referred to later in the agenda, Members also agreed to establish a Health & Wellbeing Panel in order to provide support to the community.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the current objective and work programme be agreed and,
3. That, bin provision, the Inclusivity & Diversity Panel, and a Health & Wellbeing panel be added to the plan for further consideration by officers.

SC294 FINANCE REPORT

The Committee received and considered the report of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) which summarised the budgets under its remit, along with associated costs centres and codes.

Resolved:

That, the report be noted.

SC295 **COMMUNICATIONS REPORT**

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

Members discussed the merits of using a digital display board to communicate Council business; they agreed this was a more versatile method of communication. The council would be able to display much more information than it could via its conventional noticeboards and would capture anyone passing the Council office or waiting for a bus.

The Head of Operations & Estates explained the benefits of using a freestanding unit over that of a standard LCD display and also outlined the very low energy consumption associated.

All members agreed on the purchase of a digital display, a vote was taken in favour of the freestanding display with a result of 6 members for and 2 against.

Members then discussed the conventional noticeboards and were disappointed to hear of the vandalism of those at The Leys. All members were in agreement of the recommendations in the report to maintain and manage the boards, repairing and replacing accordingly.

The request for a storage solution for the Community events PA system was agreed by all members with the suggestion that one is purchased that does not require the internal padding to be altered or removed.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the resident's survey results be noted and,
3. That, a 50" freestanding digital poster display is purchased up to the value of £2,000, this being delegated to officers to proceed and,
4. That, repairs, replacement and management of noticeboards be carried out as identified in the report and,
5. That, lockable storage of the PA system be agreed and delegated to officers to procure and,..
6. That, these purchases are made from the general reserve or from existing underspent budgets.

SC296 **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT**

The Committee received the report of the Communication & Community Engagement Officer outlining a significant number of plans for activity over the coming months.

Members requested that West Oxfordshire Community Transport is asked to participate in Car Free Day on 22 September, in addition to the suggestions outlined in the report.

Members would also like to see the term "Health & Wellbeing" used rather than "Mental Health" and that West Oxfordshire District Council is asked to support this important initiative.

Members discussed the proposal to re-launch an Inclusivity & Diversity webpage however thought the scope should be broadened to include Health and Wellbeing, establishing a

Consultancy Committee in order to continually feedback into all committees. Members also asked Officers to provide data on diversity within Witney.

The Deputy Town Clerk gave a verbal report on highlighting the Witney Twinning Association and their work with Le Touquet and Unterhaching in the Town Council window. A similar request had been received from the Youth & Schools Chaplin at St Marys Church who asked to promote Black History Month in October. All members were happy to agree to these requests.

Resolved:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, officers launch the Creepy Crawly Safari Hunt during Big Green Week and,
3. That, the council proceeds with the plans and activities for Car Free Day 2023 and,
4. That, the council facilitates a Health & Wellbeing event on 10th October 2023 and,
5. That, Christmas competitions be launched as in previous years along
6. That, the Christmas Lights Switch On event be agreed for 24 November, an indoor Christmas Market for local groups on the 25 November and Advent Fayre be held on 26 November 2023 and,
7. That, recommendation the Rotary Club of Witney manages and run the 24 November switch-on event with £2,000 grant funding from the council be approved and,
8. That, Councillor Joy Aitman represents the council at the Synolos Wellbeing meetings and reports back to this Committee and or Full Council and,
9. That, recommendation of the sum of £500 be made to Witney Vikings FC from the underspend of the coronation budget towards their Coronation Activity expenses be approved and,
10. That, the council agrees to sign up to the Community Safety Charter as outlined in the report and,
11. That, members consider ideas to improve community engagement for discussion at the meeting of the Committee on 17 July 2023 and,
12. That, Officers give consideration to a plan to support Inclusivity, Diversity and Wellbeing and,
13. That, recommendation of the sum of £500 be given by way of a discretionary grant to support the Civic Drinks Reception marking the NHS 75th Anniversary on 5th July be approved and,
14. That, recommendation of a subsidised letting to value of £42.25 for the meeting of the Witney Forum at the Corn Exchange be approved and,
15. That, Witney Twinning Association and St Marys Church be allowed to use the Town Council window for a display.

SC297 IN BLOOM COMPETITIONS

The Committee received the report of the Communications & Community Engagement Officer regarding the annual In Bloom competitions and updates on community gardeners.

Members were pleased to see plans to promote Witney by way of rubbing boards at Witney Lake & Country Park and through the introduction of planting beds on the roads leading into the town.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,

2. That, a nature trail with rubbing posts be created at the Lake and Country Park as outlined in the report and,
3. That, work commences on the construction and implementation of the Welcome to Witney planters as outlined in the report.

SC298 WITNEY YOUTH COUNCIL

Members received the report of the Deputy Town Clerk relating to the reintroduction of a Youth Council. The Deputy Town Clerk explained by way of a verbal update that the current aim was to establish a framework from which the youth council could be built.

Members discussed at length ideas on how best to approach young people within the community to ensure that a good representation is established. This could be by speaking directly to them at school assemblies, approaching churches, youth groups and other similar organisations or an Open Forum to include a broad a net as possible and ensure young people were included in the formation.

Member suggested that any task & finish group set up to establish the groundwork should be apolitical, which was agreed by others.

Recommended:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, a Witney Youth Council be re-established with a broad reach and,
3. That, a task & finish group be created with an invitation to join being made to all councillors at a meeting of the Full Council.

Councillor L Cherry left the meeting at 19:15pm during Item 12 - Witney Youth Council, due to a prior work commitment. She was replaced by the newly elected Vice Chair Councillor G Meadows.

SC299 BUS SHELTERS

Members received the confidential report of the Project Officer as well as a verbal update from the Deputy Town Clerk regarding Bus Shelters across the town.

Members were pleased to hear about the potential for additional infrastructure to be introduced, particularly with the additional environmental benefits from the use of sedum roofs.

Members were reassured to hear from the Head of Estates & Operations that council staff had sufficient capacity to maintain any additional shelters and that the additional cost of maintenance of shelters with sedum roofs was minimal.

Recommended:

1. That, the report and verbal report be noted and,
2. That, the council agrees to the project as outlined in the report and delegates to officers to manage and implement the project.

SC300 DEFIBRILLATOR REVIEW & REQUEST FROM MADLEY HALL TRUST

The Committee received the report of the Operation Manager following a request from Madley Park Residents Association (MPRA) that the Council takes over the maintenance of the defibrillator located outside of Madley Park Hall.

Members expressed their support to take on the financial responsibility to ensure this vital resource remains in good order. They were hopeful that MPRA would carry out the weekly maintenance checks and provide the council with any requirements for consumables which would suit all parties.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the Council takes on the cost of funding the consumables for the Madley Park Hall defibrillator and,
3. That, MPRA take on the responsibility of the monitoring checks.

SC301 PROJECTS UPDATE

The Committee received the report of the Project Officer updating them on the Covid-19 memorial and Late Queen's Platinum Jubilee Garden Sundial legacy project.

Members discussed the additional funding required to complete the Covid-19 Memorial and all agreed to an additional £1,000 of budget as it was important to complete this project correctly and give it the respect due. The funds would allow inscription on the two stones – together and apart which told the story of the pandemic.

Members were disappointed to hear that the sundial had been subjected to vandalism and it was now no longer able to be used as measures to make it more vandal-proof had caused further damage. Members delegated to officers explore other options for its use somewhere in the town.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, £1,000 additional budget is allocated to enable the carving of the Covid stones and,
3. That, officers explore a solution for the installation of the Sundial.

SC302 EVENTS REPORT

The Committee received the report of the Venue & Events Officer which provided details of events for the current year.

Members discussed the approach from Oxford Playhouse to host another outreach theatre event of The Leys. They believed this was an important free event which was well received last year. Members agreed a budget of up to £2,000 which the Town Clerk confirmed could be sought by the general account.

They also agreed that the request from the Coffee Shed for free use of the area outside the café for music performances should be approved on the condition that it does not infringe on any sports bookings that are to be played at The Leys.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, a budget of £2,000 be allocated from the General Account for Oxford Playhouse outreach theatre at The Leys and,
3. That, the request from Coffee Shed for use of land adjacent to the pavilion be approved for their events.

The meeting closed at: 7.55 pm

Chair