

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

Held on Tuesday, 13 June 2023

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

Present:

Councillor A Bailey (Chair)

Councillors:	G Meadows R Smith J Aitman	J Robertshaw S Simpson T Ashby
Officers:	Adam Clapton Derek Mackenzie Claire Green Sharon Groth	Deputy Town Clerk Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk Administration Support - Planning & Stronger Communities Town Clerk
Others:	2 members of the public.	

P303 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors O Collins & D Temple.

P304 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from members or officers.

P305 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Committee adjourned for this item.

The committee heard from two representatives of an organisation looking to run Forest School training sessions to be discussed at part of Agenda Item 15. This was followed by questions from members.

At the discretion of the Chair the Forest School item was moved up the agenda and discussed to allow the members of the public to hear the discussion.

The Committee reconvened.

P306 **FOREST SCHOOL**

Members received the report from the Biodiversity & Green Spaces Officer along with information verbally via Public Participation.

Members asked questions of the members of the public in order to fully understand the proposal and what it would offer to Witney residents, where sessions would be held and the benefits it would offer to attendees.

Members asked if these sessions could be advertised/offered to organisations such as Homestart in order to support those most in need.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, agreement in principle to 6 sessions to be run at a cost to the council of £2,400 with detail to be agreed at the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee meeting and,
3. That, the wellbeing benefits as outlined in the report are noted.

18:27 pm - The members of the public left along with Councillor Aitman.

P307 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Climate, Biodiversity & Planning Committee meetings held on 28 March , 18 April, 2 May and 23 May were received.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Climate, Biodiversity & Planning Committee meetings held on 28 March , 18 April, 2 May and 23 May be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

18:29 pm - Councillor Aitman returned.

P308 **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.

Members asked that the terms include the importance of water and air pollution and asked that his be added, to point (j).

The Chair also raised at this time his thoughts on the committee dealing with the issue of river pollution by way of Witney Town Council facilitating a public meeting to hear the view of residents, Thames Water and other stakeholder. He would consider the option of bringing a motion to council on the subject.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the Committee terms of reference be agreed and published including an amendment to include air & water pollution.

P309 **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.

A member raised a point of clarification on the ownership of the river and the river bank that runs through the Country Park and Snipe Meadow and therefore who was responsible for each, which was answered by the Town Clerk.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the current objective and work programme be agreed.

The Town Clerk left the meeting following conclusion of the above item.

P310 **FINANCE REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the financial report of the Responsible Financial Officer showing figures for aspects under its remit.

No questions arose from members.

Resolved:

That, the report be noted and,

P311 **PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

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

In addition, the Committee also discussed planning applications 23/01371/LBC and 23/01372/ADV for signage at the town council's town centre reception and administration office for which they provided no comment.

Resolved:

That, the comments, as per the attached schedule and for 23/01371/LBC and 23/01372/ADV, be forwarded to West Oxfordshire District Council.

P312 **APPLICATION FOR PAVEMENT LICENCE - SMARTS FISH & CHIP SHOP, HIGH STREET, WITNEY**

At the express permission of the Chair the Committee discussed an application for a new pavement licence from Smarts Fish & Chip Shop, 50 Market Square, for a renewal of a pavement licence under the Business and Planning Act 2020 due to the short timescale of the consultation.

Members had no concerns.

Resolved:

That, that a no objection comment is forwarded to the licencing team at WODC.

P313 **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.

P314 **NOTICE OF PLANNING APPEAL DECISION - QUEEN EMMA'S DYKE, WITNEY**

The Committee received notice of planning appeal APP/D3125/W/22/3293742 141 Queen Emmas Dyke, Witney, OX28 4DT

Resolved:

That, the planning appeal decision be noted.

P315 **NOTICE OF PLANNING APPEAL DECISION - LAND SOUTH WEST OF DOWNS ROAD, CURBRIDGE BUSINESS PARK**

The Committee received notice of planning appeal APP/D3125/W/22/3307358 Land at Colwell Green, Witney.

Resolved:

That, the planning appeal decision be noted.

P316 **APPLICATION FOR MINOR VARIATION OF PREMISES LICENCE - SHELL WAITROSE DUCKLINGTON**

The Committee received the application from Shell (Waitrose Ducklington), Ducklington Lane, Witney, OX28 4TT for a minor variation of a premises licence under the Licencing Act 2003.

Resolved:

That, the Council makes no objection to this application.

P317 **APPROVAL OF STREET NAME - NORREYS AVENUE**

The Committee received correspondence from West Oxfordshire District Council's address management team confirming the approval of "Norreys Avenue" as a new street name.

Resolved:

That, the correspondence be noted.

P318 WITNEY LAKE FISHING SEASON

The Committee received the report of the Biodiversity and Green Spaces Officer following a request from Witney Angling Club to extend the fishing season at Witney Lake.

The Deputy Town Clerk corrected the report as to the level of the current fishing rights charge, which was £917 including VAT and not the £1,500 quoted.

Members discussed the proposal and were pleased that the extension would be carefully monitored by both the Angling Clubs and the Biodiversity and Green Spaces Officer. They agreed that a pro-rata increase in the rent would be appropriate therefore the new rent would be £1,120 inclusive of VAT.

Resolved:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, the extension to the fishing season at Witney Lake be granted and,
3. That, the annual fishing rights charge be raised to £1,120 including inflation.

P319 WATER VOLE RECOVERY PLAN

The Committee received the report of the Biodiversity and Green Spaces Officer regarding joining the Berks, Bucks & Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust's (BBOWT's) Water Vole Recovery Project.

Members were already aware of the problematic impact of invasive American Mink on wildlife populations and therefore all supported the recommendations to control their population around the Witney Lake.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the Town Council supports the Water Vole Recovery Project to control the American Mink population.

P320 WEED CONTROL & USE OF PESTICIDES

The Committee received the report of the Operation Manager regarding the potential reintroduction of the use of pesticides.

Members understood the significant labour impact the decision to cease the use of pesticides had caused on the council and asked that the policy be drafted by officers. Weeds and overgrown vegetation had been reported widely following the good early summer weather and a solution needed to be sought.

Members understood that changes to tree management, including impeding grass growth around their trunks were necessary to protect the tree stock and limit any further damage.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, officers draft a Pesticides Policy on town council owned land for agreement at a future meeting and,
3. That, a growth regulator be used around the base of trees.

The meeting closed at: 7.45 pm

Chair