

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

Held on Monday, 29 January 2024

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

Present:

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

Councillors:	O Collins R Smith J Doughty	G Doughty (In place of T Ashby) R Crouch (In place of J Aitman)
Officers:	Adam Clapton Sharon Groth Polly Inness Derek Mackenzie Annie Hathaway Mark Lewis	Deputy Town Clerk Town Clerk Communications & Community Engagement Officer Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk Business Administration Apprentice Head of Estates & Operations
Others:	No members of the public. Councillor James Robertshaw	

SC36 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors T Ashby (with Councillor G Doughty) attending as a substitute, and J Aitman (with Councillor R Crouch attending as a substitute).

An apology for absence was also received from Councillor L Cherry (by previously agreed dispensation).

SC37 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members or officers.

SC38 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of the Stronger Communities Committee held on 13 November 2023 were received.

S607 – It was confirmed by Officers that Windrush and Tower Hill Cemeteries would be included in the communications issued to discourage dog fouling.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Stronger Communities Committee held on 13 November 2023 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

SC39 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

SC40 **FINANCE REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) detailing income and expenditure for budgets which were the responsibility of the committee.

A vote was taken to approve the acceptance of the report and the management accounts, all members were in agreement.

Resolved:

That, the report be noted.

SC41 **COMMUNICATIONS REPORT**

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

Members were pleased to see quotations from local companies for the printing and distribution of the four-page Spring edition of the Council's newsletter which would be delivered to 13,661 homes in Witney.

Members asked that details of the Council Precept and the big projects due to be delivered by the in the next year were made prominent in the issue so that residents had the opportunity to see how their Council Tax contribution was spent.

Members also asked that the issue carries a QR code so that residents could access further information on subjects that were included.

Of the four quotes provided for consideration; Members agreed to proceed with the one from Fineprint at a cost of £2,231.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, Officers consider the Members suggestions for content style of the annual newsletter and,
3. That, Fineprint be selected as the supplier and distributor.

SC42 **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT**

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

Members welcomed the inclusion of the customer satisfaction questionnaire as part of the Spring Newsletter as this is an excellent way to obtain feedback from those residents that didn't wish to or were not able to use email/internet.

On the subject of the Carnival, members were unanimous in support of participating in the parade and were enthusiastic about the theme. They discussed various potential TV programmes, settling on the characters of Trumpton and Camblewick Green.

There was some concern from Members that having a specific “Councillors at the Carnival” stall could distract from what should be a special and enjoyable day, however it was proposed that all councillors participate in supporting the usual Council’s children activity stall where they would be on hand to have an informal chat with residents with concerns.

A member suggested that Officer consider the activity to be making a Trumpton/Camblewick Green “peg doll” to compliment the councils parade theme.

Members also received a verbal update from the C&CEO regarding the Town Council’s 50th anniversary arrangements. Members provided additional suggestions for activities during the year which would utilise the remaining £2,500 unallocated budget towards events for different age groups throughout the year. Events suggested ranged from a Virtual Reality Day or silent disco for teens, family sports event such as rounders with an evening 70/80’s Disco provided by Windrush Radio and a film and buffet for seniors.

There was also the suggestion that the In Bloom awards could be given a “golden/50 year” theme.

The C&CEO would advise Members on the confirmed 50th Anniversary events as soon as possible.

Resolved:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, all councillors to participate in the Witney Carnival Parade and,
3. That, the theme of the Councils parade be Camblewick Green and Trumpton and,
4. That, Councillor to be available at support the children’s activity to chat to residents.

SC43 **D-DAY 80TH ANNIVERSARY**

The Committee received a verbal update from Officers following the meeting of the Working Party that had taken place earlier that day.

Members heard that council were due to purchase a lamp of peace to be used as part of the service to be held in the market square on the evening of 6 June and therefore, requested that one be offered to Le Touquet should they wish to receive it.

Resolved:

1. That, the verbal update be noted and,
2. That, Officers ask Le Touquet if they would like to receive a Lamp of Peace.

SC44 **YOUTH COUNCIL TASK & FINISH GROUP**

The minutes of the Youth Council Task & Finish Group meeting held on 15 January 2024 were received for consideration.

In addition to the report, Officers added that work to produce the recruitment video had commenced.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Youth Council Task & Finish Group meeting held on 15 January 2024 be noted.

SC45 **YOUTH SERVICES**

The Committee received a verbal update from the Deputy Town Clerk advising that Bright Futures intended to commence in time for the February half term holidays subject to the signing of the agreement between them and the Town Council. This would then allow for the release of the initial grant funding.

Resolved:

1. That, the verbal update be noted and,
2. That, Officers work with Bright Futures to have the agreement signed and grant payment issued as soon as possible.

SC46 **XMAS LIGHTS WORKING PARTY**

The Committee received the notes for the Christmas Light Working Party meeting held on 17 January 2024.

Members heard further from the Head of Estates & Operations who outlined the next steps to be taken towards creating the scope of the tender so that it could be issued to prospective providers.

Officers would also be consulting with residents of Church Green with details of the proposal to gain their thoughts on the additional lights that may be installed.

Resolved:

1. That, the notes of the meeting of 17 January 2024 be noted and,
2. That, Officers produce the scope of tender and,
3. That, residents of Church Green are consulted.

SC47 **IN BLOOM**

The Committee received the report of the Communications & Community Engagement Officer (C&CEO) outlining the arrangements for the 2024 Thames & Chiltern In Bloom competition.

Members unanimously agreed the Council should enter the Country Park into the 2024 competition in a hope of achieving a gold award in its 50th year.

They also considered the theme for the Schools In Bloom wheelbarrow project and following earlier discussion, agreed that a 50th theme should be considered as this would allow children to consider what the world may look like against what they wanted it to look like and could be a way in which climate change could be incorporated.

Members discussed the idea of the introduction of a Best Kept Allotment category to the Annual Citizen of the Year awards starting in 2025. They agreed this should be judged by Witney Allotment Association and awarded to one overall allotment across all the sites. In Bloom was also celebrating its 60th anniversary so social media posts and a small gathering for Community Gardening groups was suggested.

In relation to an underspend in the In Bloom budget, the Committee agreed to the Parks & Recreation Committee's request to provide £1,250 towards planting which would complete the Children's Memorial Garden at Windrush Cemetery

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the council enter the Country Park for the 2024 competition and,
3. That, a theme of "50 years in the future" be used for the School In Bloom Wheelbarrows and,
4. That, a small celebration be arranged for the community gardeners and,
5. That, an award for Best Kept Allotment be introduced for Citizen of the Year from 2025.
6. That, £1,250 from the In Bloom Budget be provided to complete the Children's Memorial Garden project, subject to agreement by the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee.

SC48 **WOODGREEN BUS SHELTER REQUEST**

The Committee received correspondence from a resident requesting a bus shelter at Woodgreen.

Members considered the request and agreed the cost of installation and maintenance of a shelter at this time was not financially sound. However, consideration would be given again if suitable funds became available, possibly from a Section 106 agreement following future development. A Member would also ask other local residents to enquire about additional demand for a shelter at this location.

A Member advised that a local hospitality company had provided financial support to the S7 route between Witney and Oxford via Woodstock and asked Officers to contact them to ask if they would consider the installation or funds towards a timetable case at the location.

Resolved:

1. That, the request for a bus shelter at Woodgreen be noted and,
2. That, a response is sent to the requestor to advise of the Council's decision and,
3. That, Officers contact Estelle Manor to ask if they would consider further financial support and,
4. That, Officers arrange for the installation of a timetable holder and service information and,
5. That, OCC add as a consideration to the LCWIP and,
6. That, Officers consider adding to a future S106 request if the opportunity arises with a future development.

SC49 **WITNEY HIGH STREET ENGAGEMENT REPORT**

The Committee received the Witney High Street and Market Square Enhancement Scheme Engagement Report produced by Oxfordshire County Council.

Members welcomed the finding of the report and looked forward to the next round of consultations and plans.

Resolved:

That, the report be noted.

SC50 **THIRD PARTY EVENTS REPORT**

The Committee received the report of the Venue & Events Officer which provided details of upcoming events to be held on the council's recreation areas in 2024.

Resolved:

That, the report be noted.

The meeting closed at: 7.08 pm

Chair