

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

**Held on Monday, 18 March 2024**

**At 6.10 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney**

**Present:**

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

Councillors:	L Cherry O Collins R Smith	T Ashby A Bailey J Doughty
Officers:	Sharon Groth Adam Clapton Derek Mackenzie	Town Clerk Deputy Town Clerk Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
Others:	Two members of the public. Councillor Geoff Doughty Councillor Jack Treloar	

SC143 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Cllr J Aitman.

SC144 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest from Members or officers.

SC145 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Stronger Communities Committee held on 29 January 2024 were received.

**Resolved:**

That, the minutes of the Stronger Communities Committee meeting held on 29 January 2024 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the chair.

SC146 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

The Committee adjourned for this item.

The committee received representations from The Station, Witney concerning Agenda Item 10, Youth Services.

As the detached youth service being funded by the Town Council under Bright Futures Oxfordshire Ltd, the Committee welcomed the update; they were pleased to hear the initiative had launched and youth workers would be out with young people from the end of March and during the summer months.

The Committee reconvened.

SC147 **FINANCE REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO).

**Recommended:**

1. That, the report be noted.
2. That, the management accounts of the Committee's services to 31 January 2024 be approved.

SC148 **COMMUNICATIONS REPORT**

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

Members welcomed an update on the Council's website and agreed it needed updating as previously resolved. They noted the cost of an external supplier but felt more detail was needed on what the quote covered along with other comparable quotes. There was agreement the current website should be re-mapped, and a new theme should be tested in-house before committing to a larger project and outlay.

There was also some concern about the speed of the current website and although this would be looked at if externally sourced, it was felt it was not enough of an issue if the website was retained internally.

The Committee also noted an update on the resident's satisfaction survey and an issue with glare, which was hindering viewing of the Council's digital signage.

**Resolved:**

1. That, the report be noted.
2. That, re-mapping and a new theme for the Council's website should be trialled internally.
3. That, officers explore options for an anti-reflective shade for the digital signage.

SC149 **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT**

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

Members were pleased to hear plans to mark the Council's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary were underway which included a young person's Virtual Reality event and that communications regarding voter engagement and the Great British Clean Up were planned. In relation to a young litter picker, it was agreed they should be rewarded for their actions.

The Committee agreed dedicated signage and a gazebo were required for the Councillors at The Café event, which had proved to be very successful and that vouchers for community gardening groups and schools for In Bloom should be increased due to rising costs.

With regard to competitions, Members wanted to continue with the ever-popular Christmas competitions and agreed the Christmas Carol service sheet should be offered to seniors for one final year to gauge interest. The Committee also agreed the Wild Witney competition should be run again but thought needed to be given on how this could be promoted to gain further entries.

Finally, The Committee discussed Heritage Open Days and Car Free Day which were held annually in September. Members were supportive of holding the Heritage days along previous lines which would tie into the Council's anniversary, but there were mixed views on Car Free Day. They noted the interest and uptake had been limited in recent years and agreed that applying resources to the event was not good value for money. However, the climate emergency was one of the Council's key aims and it should be highlighted. There appeared to be a disconnect with 'green' events and residents and apathy from other local authorities who should also be involved.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the report be noted.
2. That, the 50th anniversary update be noted.
3. That, the young litter picker be rewarded by attending the opening of the Lake & Country Park art rubbing post trail and tour by the Biodiversity & Green Spaces Officer.
4. That, permanent signage and a gazebo be purchased for the sole use of Councillors @ The Café.
5. That, a voter engagement campaign is supported.
6. That, the budgets for In Bloom vouchers be increased in 2024/25 and dispersed to community gardeners (£40) and schools (£50).
7. That, the Christmas competitions, including light, official card and Christmas carol service sheet are run in the same way as the previous year.
8. That, the Council runs a Wild Witney competition.
9. That, the Council runs a Heritage Open Day event in 2024.
10. That, Car Free Day is run as a social media event in 2024, unless other authorities are able to assist in the facilitation of an event on Market Square/High Street.

*Cllr A Bailey left the meeting at 7:12pm*

SC150 **WITNEY FORUM MINUTES - 5 FEBRUARY 2024**

The Committee received the notes of the Witney Forum Meeting held on 6 February 2024.

Through this group an Oxfordshire County Council initiative on creating a Witney Community Profile Steering Group had been established. Members were invited to nominate two Council representatives who may like to attend and feedback information.

Cllr L Cherry and Cllr J Aitman were nominated, seconded and agreed as Members, subject to Cllr Aitman's agreement.

**Resolved:**

1. That, the Witney Forum minutes of 6 February 2024 be noted.

2. That, Cllrs L Cherry and J Aitman be put forward as nominated representatives of the Council to the Witney Community Profile Steering Group.

SC151 **WITNEY YOUTH COUNCIL**

The Committee received a verbal update from the Deputy Town Clerk.

Members were advised a recruitment video had been recorded, draft terms of reference had been created and work was underway on posters, forms and information. Regrettably, other projects and tasks had meant there was no further update at this time.

**Resolved:**

That's, the verbal update be noted.

SC152 **INCLUSIVITY & DIVERSITY PANEL**

The Committee received a verbal update from The Leader of the Council.

Unfortunately, time had not allowed for a meeting to take place, but it was hoped this happen before the next meeting of the Committee.

**Resolved:**

That, the verbal update be noted.

SC153 **YOUTH SERVICES**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk.

There was an update on The Station Youth project, which outlined their plans for the summer and which had already been provided during public participation.

Members also agreed the Council should reform the Youth Services Forum which had met in response to the cessation of Got2B CIC last year. It had provided a useful sounding board for services and would provide an update on the detached youth work to stakeholders and would help glean activities for young people over the summer, to be published by the Council.

In relation to the remaining Youth Services budget, there were hopes that the Council may be able to fund young person's health and wellbeing sessions again during the summer so a decision on how else it should be expended was deferred until the situation was clearer.

**Resolved:**

1. That, the report be noted.
2. That, the update regarding the Station, under Bright Futures Oxfordshire be noted.
3. That, the Witney Youth Forum is reformed for a meeting after Easter.
4. That, the decision on expending the remaining amounts of the Council's youth budget be deferred until later in the year.

SC154 **D-DAY 80TH ANNIVERSARY**

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

The Leader, as Chair of the task and finish group also offered a verbal update and went through the proposed timetable of the day on 6 June. The Deputy Town Clerk added that the RAF Cadets had offered to bring their flight simulator which would be recreating the flights who flew to Normandy 80 years ago.

Members were pleased to hear the update and thanked all those involved in the planning. They were supportive of purchasing lanterns of peace which could be taken into care homes during the day by councillors.

**Resolved:**

1. That, the report and update be noted.
2. That, the purchase of lanterns of peace for care homes be approved.

SC155 **THIRD PARTY EVENTS REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk.

Members were in agreement that subsidised hire of the Leys should be provided to Witney Pride, Witney Carnival and Witney Music Festival due to the social and economic value they provided to the community.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the report be noted.
2. That, subsidised hire be awarded to Witney Pride for the value of £715.00.
3. That, subsidised hire be awarded to Witney Carnival for the value of £1,775.00.
4. That, subsidised hire be awarded to Witney Music Festival for the value of £2,365.00 (as agreed in the Partnership Agreement).

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The meeting closed at: 7.38 pm

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Chair