

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

**Held on Monday, 15 July 2024**

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

**Present:**

Councillor L Cherry (Chair)

Councillors:	G Meadows	A Bailey
	R Smith	J Doughty
	T Ashby	S Simpson
Officers:	Adam Clapton	Deputy Town Clerk
	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
Others:	One member of the public.	

**SC386 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor O Collins

**SC387 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest from Members or officers.

**SC388 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Stronger Communities Committee held on 3 June 2024 were received.

SC281 - The appointment of the Vice Chair for the Committee was dealt with at the meeting of the Council on 17 June 2024. Minute Item 336 refers.

SC284 - A member asked that all local Uniformed Service Organisations be included in the invitations to join the Youth Council.

SC290 - The Committee Clerk advised that the three blue plaques had been sent for renovation.

SC291 – A member asked that it be clarified that the comments noted in the minute as “reservations” were more accurately comments to highlight diversity and transparency.

The Leader raised the lack of disabled parking at The Leys during third party events comments that were supported by a member who herself experienced difficulties. The Rotary Club of Witney had included disabled parking in their event plan for Witney Carnival however the Council did not make appropriate arrangements for accommodate this. Members agreed that

the event plan guidance and policy be reviewed, and a report prepared for a future meeting for agreement.

**Resolved:**

1. That, the above noted amendments be noted and,
2. That, the invite to join the Youth Council be extended to all local Uniformed Organisations and,
3. That, the Council's third-party events policy, in respect of disabled event parking at The Leys, be reviewed and brought to the meeting of the Committee on 18 November 2024 and,
4. That, the minutes of the Stronger Communities Committee held 3 June 2024 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the chair.

**SC389 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

*The Committee adjourned for this item.*

The Committee received representations from a representative of Home Start Oxford concerning Agenda Item 8.

Members asked questions in order to gain clarification and further information regarding other funding sources that Home Start had already explored such as the WODC's Westhive scheme or had planned to approach businesses for corporate support.

*The Committee reconvened.*

**SC390 YOUTH SERVICES**

With the express permission of the Chair the item was moved up the agenda in order for the representative from Home Start Oxford to hear the deliberation in respect of the grant application.

The report included a request from Home Start Oxford seeking a grant award of £11,000. Members were supportive of the work they carried out and were therefore in unanimous support of the proposal made by Councillor R Smith, seconded by Councillor J Doughty to award £11,000 as requested. Members were aware of the financial implications of awarding this sum and the impact on the Youth Provisions budget as outlined in the report.

Following the award of the grant Members received and considered the other items in the report of the Deputy Town Clerk (DTC) in respect of Youth Services

The DTC advised that two applications had been received for the Youth Council and that there was lot of interest at the Carnival so hoped this would lead to more.

Arrangements for publishing Summer Holiday Activities was progressing and once released Members were encouraged to share this widely.

Members were disappointed to hear that Assisting Parents of Children Affected by Mental Health (APCAM) youth mental health drop-in sessions had not yet been confirmed for the school holidays. It was felt that if arrangements couldn't be put in place soon then sufficient notification of the sessions would not be able to be given. Officers were asked to contact APCAM for a

response by 18 July and final arrangements would be put in place with the agreement of the Chair and Leader, anticipated required funding being £1,200-£1,500.

Lastly, members considered establishing separate budget lines for the continued support of The Station and Home Start Oxford, both were seen as integral to the Town however, the grant awards, £28,000 and £11,000 respectively, to these two organisations had all but exhausted the Youth Provision budget for 2024/25.

It was suggested that Officers prepare a report for the next meeting of the Committee to consider how to structure this vital grant funding along with the retention of the existing Youth Provision budget. All members were in agreement.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, £11,000 be awarded to Home Start Oxford from the Youth Provision Budget (4169/408) and,
3. That, it be delegated to Officer in association with the Chair and leader to finalise the award of funding to APCAM should arrangements be advised by 18 July 2024 and,
4. That, up to £1,000 be funded from the Youth Provision budget (4169/408) for grant support to APCAM with any additional funding coming from the discretionary budget fund (4100/407) and,
5. That, if the £1,000 grant award to APCAM remains unused in 2024/25 then it be rolled over and earmarked for use by APCAM in 2025/26 budget year.
6. That, a report be prepared by Officers regarding the establishment of separate budget lines for funding of The Station and Home Start Oxford as well as the retention of the existing Youth Provision budget from 2025/26 onwards.

*(The representative from Home Start Oxford left the meeting at 6:22pm following the award of the grant and prior to the discussion of the other items under Agenda Item 8)*

**SC391 RESIDENTS SATISFACTION SURVEY RESULTS**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk concerning the results of the resident's annual satisfaction survey which was held at the beginning of the year.

Members were disappointed to see negative comments regarding the Christmas lights however, hoped that the newly agreed contract would deliver improvements to the display starting this year.

Members also discussed the 2023 Floral arrangement, verges, and the visual appearance of the grassed roundabouts under the Towns control with mixed opinions, the Deputy Town Clerk acknowledged the comments and advised that both Officers and the whole Operations Team would continue to work to improve these areas.

The Committee discussed the provision of benches on land owned by the Council, members asked that consideration be given to increasing the number as well as the installation of picnic benches at recreational areas.

Members expressed their confusion with not always being clear what land is owned, and therefore who was responsible for areas of land. The Committee Clerk advised that there was a land responsibility map on the Council's website and that the Administrative Team at the Town Hall reception was happy to assist any enquiries using additional mapping available to them.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, a review of the provision of benches is carried out by Officers.

*(Cllr A Bailey left the meeting at 6:50pm to attend an event in his capacity as Deputy Mayor)*

SC392 **COMMUNICATIONS REPORT**

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

Members were in agreement that the Council support the work of the Witney Talking News group as much as possible with suggestions such as the offer to for them to make use of the Community window in the Town Hall reception, for Councillors to offer to provide content by way of a Question & Answer piece and that Officers add the organisation's details to the Partners page of the Councils Website.

Members were pleased to hear of the two consultations that took place at Witney Carnival to gain residents opinion on the renovation of the splash park and for the new MUGA/MUSA arrangements for Raleigh Crescent and looked forward to hearing further on these projects.

The Committee agreed unanimously that additional signage was not needed to ask owners not to allow their dog to foul and believed that the social media campaign would help to highlight the issue along with the problems with littering.

**Resolved:**

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the use of the Community Windows be offered to Witney Talking News and,
3. That, Officers add the Witney Talking News to the Councils website as a Partner and,
4. That, Dog fouling be covered in the Council's social media campaign.

SC393 **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Communications & Community Engagement Officer. The Deputy Town Clerk provided a verbal summary and answered questions on the content of the report.

Members discussed the importance of supporting the aim of the White Ribbon organisation and agreed that regular social media posts throughout the year should be used to keep the subject in people's minds.

The Committee reviewed the Councillors in the Café events, Members felt these had been useful but hadn't reached an extensive audience of residents however, with some small changes they could be more impactful. Ideas regarding clearer signage and better advertisement by Councillors should lead to better attendances and more productive conversation.

Members were pleased to support a Virtual Reality Day and agreed that time-limited wristbands should be used to ensure as many young people as possible can participate.

**Resolved:**

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, regular social media posts be scheduled to highlight the effect of domestic violence against women and girls and,
3. That, the Councillors in the Café events continue but that further discussion takes place at the Full Council meeting and,
4. That, the VR Day as part of the Council's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary events run with time restricted sessions.

SC394 **THE STATION DETACHED YOUTH - FEEDBACK**

The Committee was pleased to receive the update from The Station regarding feedback from their sessions.

Members discussed the proposal for a climbing wall however felt that this should be revisited at a later date by the Parks & Recreation Committee

Members discussed the idea of providing a space for young people to meet when the weather is not good. Members suggested that The Station speak with Courtside CIC who were proposing to have space available in their new facility at The Leys, perhaps a dedicated evening each week would allow The Station to additional engage with the young people.

The Committee also discussed if the Corn Exchange Café could be used for the same purpose under the supervision of The Station.

**Resolved:**

1. That, the correspondence be noted and,
2. That, the possibility of installing a permanent climbing wall at a Council facility is explored via the Parks & Recreation Committee and,
3. That, use of the Corn Exchange or new Courtside CIC facility at The Leys is explored.

SC395 **PARISH TRANSPORT MEETING - 19 MARCH 2024**

The Committee received the minutes of the Parish Transport Representatives Meeting held on 19 March 2024.

**Resolved:**

That, the minutes be noted.

SC396 **DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE OXFORDSHIRE**

The Committee received correspondence from Oxfordshire County Council regarding the upgraded Digital Infrastructure Oxfordshire Website.

**Resolved:**

That, the correspondence be noted.

SC397 **TOWN CENTRE CCTV SCHEME – REQUEST FOR CAPITAL CONTRIBUTION**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) prepared following a request from West Oxfordshire District Council to further contribute to the replacement of Witney CCTV cameras.

The Leader outlined her disappointment that following the agreement of the Council to contribute the sum of approx. £11,500 annually for the next three years, WODC were asking for further financial support despite at the same time notifying of the savings they were making due to the new scheme.

Members were in agreement and felt that without evidence to show the benefit of the CCTV scheme to the Town they were not prepared to offer additional funds. A Member, who was also a WODC Councillor advised that despite a similar request, Thames Valley Police had been unable to provide the necessary figures when requested.

The Deputy Town Clerk highlighted the duty that the Town Council had under the Crime & Disorder Act 1998 which Members acknowledged by felt that without further details they could not commit the funds and were already providing £11,500 annually.

It was proposed by Councillor R Smith, seconded by Councillor J Doughty that on receipt of additional information, the Council would consider an additional financial contribution in the 2025/26 budget year provided it showed a benefit to the Town. All members were in agreement.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, additional information be requested to provide evidence of the benefit of the CCTV to the Town and,
3. That, a figure of £10,000 be added to the 2025/26 budget for this purpose.

SC398 **TREE GIVEAWAY**

The Committee received and considered the correspondence from the International Tree Foundation regarding their request for a contribution to support the Oxfordshire Garden Tree Giveaway in Witney via the Foodbank.

Members felt the idea was good however, agreed unanimously not to make a contribution to the scheme, it was felt that should individuals wish to plant a tree in their garden then greater consideration should be given and that the free giveaway may lead to individuals planting unsuitable trees and creating an inverse impact.

**Resolved:**

That, the correspondence be noted.

SC399 **SPRUCE UP YOUR SIGNS**

The Committee received the correspondence from Oxfordshire County Council's Volunteer Coordination team concerning their promotion of the "spruce up your signs" campaign.

Members felt that the scheme was aimed at smaller parishes where the work could perhaps be completed in half or a full day. However, Councillors G Meadows and S Simpson were eager to establish this in Witney and it was therefore agreed that the details would be shared with all Town Councillors to seek assistance to ensure that each ward received the same upkeep in a timely manner.

The Deputy Town Clerk advised that Officers would continue to speak with the Council's Insurance provider to investigate how members of public may be covered for carrying out volunteer work within the Town should interest be shown.

**Resolved:**

1. That, the correspondence be noted and,
2. That, an invitation be sent to all Councillor to assist Councillors Meadow and Simpson.

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The meeting closed at: 7.40 pm

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Chair