

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

**Held on Monday, 16 September 2019**

**At 7.00 pm in the Gallery Room, Corn Exchange, Witney**

**Present:**

Councillor L Ashbourne (Chair)

Councillors:	J Aitman R Bolger O Collins D Enright	V Gwatkin (In place of J King) A McMahon R Smith
Officers:	Sharon Groth Adam Clapton John Hickman Polly Inness Nicky Cayley	Town Clerk Office Manager Operations & Estates Officer Communications & Events Officer Democratic Services Officer
Others:	no members of the public.	

**SC366 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for his absence was received from Cllr J King.

**SC367 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no interests declared at the meeting.

**SC368 MINUTES**

- a) RESOLVED:** that the Minutes of the meeting held on 8 July 2019 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman with the following amendments:

D T Enright is changed to D Enright in the list of attendees;  
Minute C334 – that the words “verbal report from the Events and Communications Officer” are inserted after “a” in the first line.

- b) MATTERS ARISING:** there were no matters arising to be discussed at the meeting.

**SC369 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There were no members of the public present for this item.

SC370 **COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The committee considered this item and determined that this should form part of the Witney Town Council Strategic Plan which was now in progress.

SC371 **OPERATIONAL REPORT - PROGRESS SINCE LAST MEETING**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations and Estates Officer. He added that he has been in contact with a resident who had offered 6 oaks to be planted at King George V Field but he had asked them to bring them on to two years old as the Town Council could not plant them before that point. A member asked if other trees could be planted and he replied that they could as long as the right trees were planted in the right places.

Members moved onto discussing the proposed pesticide policy and how to move forward with this issue. The Operations and Estates Officer advised that STRI was in the process of writing a report for the sports areas but there may be incidences such as wasps' nests when some pesticides may need to be used in small quantities. Generally, members felt that if at all possible, things such as wasps' nests should be left alone but agreed that occasionally a pesticide may be needed if there was a danger to the public. However, Officers were asked to look for organic alternatives wherever possible. A member asked if the Operations and Estates officer could speak to Oxford City Council as it did not use pesticides. The Operations and Estates Officer replied that he had download its policy and they did use some pesticides.

The Operations and Estates Officer highlighted the fact that the Church was expecting the Town Council to use a chemical to remove the ivy from the wall that needed repairing as it was extremely deep rooted. If it was done by hand, the wall would have to be taken down and rebuilt and this was not a possibility.

Members voted on a proposal that whilst all possible attempts should be made to use organic methods to control pests/weeds, on some occasions, chemicals may need to be used, but this would be assessed on a case by case basis. All members voted in favour with the exception of Cllr Bolger who abstained.

The Operations and Estates Officer advised that due to the policy of minimal chemical use, the green at West Witney Bowls Club was suffering from excess moss. In order to get fresh air moving across the green – which would help to remedy this – some of the adjacent trees needed to be removed. Members were unsure about this and asked if the Operations and Estates Officer could ask the contractors if they could reduce the canopy enough without removing trees. A member asked if removing some trees would improve the health of the other and the Operations and Estates Officer confirmed that it would.

**RESOLVED:**

1. that the report be noted;
2. that that whilst all possible attempts should be made to use organic methods to control pests/weeds, on some occasions, chemicals may need to be used, but this would be assessed on a case by case basis;
3. that the Operations and Estates Officer ask the contractors if reducing the canopy of the trees adjacent to the bowls green at West Witney Sports Ground would be sufficient to improve the condition of the green – if this was the case then this should go ahead;
4. that if trees needed removing from West Witney, the Operations and Estates Officer should bring it back to the Committee.

SC372 **STREET FURNITURE AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

1. Request for "A Bench to Tackle Loneliness"

The Committee received and considered correspondence from the Guideposts Trust which had asked for the Council's support in designating a bench in the town as a chat bench, to help tackle loneliness. Officers had suggested that the bench adjacent to the Halifax building society be refurbished and designated for this purpose. The Chair commented that this could be done in time for Mental Health Awareness Day and proposed that a small budget of £100 could be set aside for the charity to renovate the bench.

**RECOMMENDED:** that Guideposts be advised that the Town Council agrees to the bench adjacent to the Halifax Building Society be designated as a Chat bench and that a budget of £100 be set aside for Guideposts to renovate it.

2. Request for a Bin at Curbridge Road Bus Stop

The Committee received and considered correspondence from a resident who had requested a bin at the Curbridge Road bus stop. Members were happy for a recycling bin to be installed. The Town Clerk advised that permission would be needed as it was not on Town Council land and there would be on costs for collection.

**RECOMMENDED:** that a recycling bin should be installed adjacent to the Curbridge Road Bus stop, subject to permission from Oxfordshire County Council.

3. Street Piano

The Town Clerk advised members that she had spoken to Abingdon and Witney College who had been very enthusiastic about the possibility of decorating the street piano. She had agreed to present a brief to the students who would then come up with designs. These would then be judged by a panel of Council members.

**RESOLVED:** that the update be noted.

4. Defibrillator

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations and Estates Officer. Members agreed that a new unit was required at The Leys.

**RECOMMENDED:** that a new defibrillator was purchased for The Leys at a cost of £795 plus VAT and £9.95 shipping.

SC373 **PRESS COVERAGE UPDATE**

The Committee received and considered the press coverage update.

**RESOLVED:** that the update be noted.

SC374 **EVENTS**

1. Civic/Council Run Events

The Events and Communications Officer advised that Witney's greatest had been a small event but had gone well. Next year it would be launched earlier and with more focused and targeted community engagement.

The Heritage Open Day had been cancelled as there had been no interest. The Museum had not done well either and next year it may be beneficial to work together.

**RECOMMENDED:** that the report be noted.

2. Third Party Events on Council Land

Members considered an update in the report of the Operations and Estates Officer.

There followed a long discussion on the retention of the Music Festival's deposit as there had been some damage caused, particularly to the football pitch. Officers cautioned members that the Music Festival received a grant and therefore no money was received from them which could be set aside to repair grass damage. If the deposit was returned then the tax payers would be paying for the repairs.

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. that the report be noted;
2. that £600 of the £1, 000 deposit is withheld to go towards covering the repairs to the damaged grass;
3. that the Carnival's request to hold its event on 11 July 2020 be agreed;
4. that a draft of reviewed terms and conditions for third party events be brought back to the next meeting, with carbon offsetting to be included.

3. Christmas Dinner Community Event

Cllr Smith gave an update on this project. Witney Fridge was on board and cooking equipment had been sourced. She would update at the next meeting.

**RESOLVED:** that the update be noted.

SC375 **COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND INITIATIVES**

1. Town Led Financial Education System

Cllr Gwatkin had previously circulated a paper setting out her ideas for a financial education system for young people in the town. There would be no cost to the Town Council as she would go into schools to deliver this herself.

**RESOLVED:** that the Town Council supports this initiative.

2. Launch of Citizen of the Year

The Events and Communications Officer advised that Citizen of the Year was now being launched and invited nominations. This year it would be restricted to 1 adult, 1 young person and 1 organisation in order to retain a sense of distinction.

**RESOLVED:** that the report be noted.

SC376 ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND VANDALISM

The Town Clerk reported that she had attended multiagency meetings and that a mobile camera would be put on The Leys. The Town Council would need to pay for a sim card for it. The most difficult issue was looking at how to integrate it into the existing town centre system.

The Chair suggested a meeting about ASB in the town. The Town Clerk advised that this might help obtain a public space protection order. Members felt that a weekend might be best but delegated it to the Town Clerk to select a suitable date.

There was a discussion on the idea of writing an open letter to residents ahead of advertising the meeting but it was decided that this could be done in the form of an invitation to the public meeting, setting out the Town Council's support for CCTV on The Leys.

The Committee then received and considered the report of the Operations and Estates Officer on vandalism to Town Council property in the Town.

**RESOLVED:**

1. that the report of the Town Clerk be noted;
2. that a public meeting be held to discuss ASB in the town and that it be delegated to the Town Clerk to select a suitable date;
3. that an open invitation to the meeting be sent to the public, that also sets out the Town Council's support for CCTV at The Leys;
4. that the report on vandalism to Council property be noted.

*Cllr Gwatkin left the meeting at 9.10pm*

*As the meeting had now reached over 2 hours in length, the Committee agreed to suspend standing order 48 in order to allow the meeting to continue for a further 10 minutes.*

SC377 YOUTH COUNCIL UPDATE

The Committee received and considered the report of the Events and Communications Officer.

**RESOLVED:** that the update on the progress of the Youth Council be noted.

SC378 FINANCE REPORT

The Committee received and considered the financial report of the Town Clerk. She asked members to think about items for budget setting in the next cycle of meetings.

**RESOLVED:** that the report be noted.

SC379 **MINUTES OF SUB COMMITTEES AND WORKING PARTIES**

In Bloom Sub Committee – 5 September 2019

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the sub committee held on 5 September 2019.

**RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the sub committee be noted.

VE Day 75 Working Party – 2 September 2019

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the working party held on 2 September 2019. The members discussed the Freedom Parade and Fly Past, with the Officers pointing out that there was an agreement with RAF Brize Norton that it would exercise its Freedom of the town every three years, and had only in fact exercised this right last year.

**RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the working party be noted and the recommendations contained therein with the exception of recommendation 5 – the Freedom Parade and Fly Past.

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The meeting closed at: 9.20 pm

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Chair