
Agenda Item: West Witney Project Funding

Meeting: Monday 31 March 2025

Contact Officer: Responsible Financial Officer (RFO)

Background

The Council has previously approved undertaking major works at the West Witney complex, making provision for its funding over a number of years. Members have received regular reports from officers as the Project has been developed.

The West Witney Project represents the largest investment in this complex since it was acquired in 1979. The Project is an important part of the Council's adopted Open Spaces Strategy. Although the Project may be viewed as two separate projects – the refurbishment of the West Witney Sports and Social Club building and the provision of a new works depot – the linkages and shared site mean that it makes sense for this to be considered as one project.

The Project secures the future of the West Witney Sports and Social Club (WWSSC) and the provision of the works depot at this site has allowed the major improvements at the Leys to take place by releasing land for improved sporting and leisure facilities. The improved facilities for the works depot are also necessary as the Town Council takes on more sport and leisure facilities which will require servicing and will give the Council the flexibility to respond to the likelihood of more services being taken on from other local authorities as a result of the restructuring of local government and the implementation of unitary authorities.

Current Situation

The Council's planning for the delivery of the West Witney Project is well advanced. Planning permission for the refurbishment of the clubhouse and the new build depot have been granted.

The Council has also budgeted for the works over a number of years, setting aside moneys from reserves and also for loan payments and the agreed capital programme for the project is as follows:

Expenditure:

WWSSC building refurbishment	£1,000,000
New build outside services/ works depot	£850,000

Total Project budget £1,850,000

Funding:

Loan £1,250,516

s.106 contributions (WWSSC building) £301,975

Council earmarked reserves £297,509

Total funding £1,850,000

Your officers anticipate that we should over the next couple of months be in receipt of more accurate project costings to reflect the increased details which we now have, alongside current market conditions regarding building works. When we have the requisite information the Council will be in a position to move to formal public consultation. With all the usual caveats that the dates assume that the project does not encounter unexpected problems, the project timeline is set out below:

Date	West Witney Project Funding	Phase 1 development - New build outdoor services depot	Phase 2 development - WWSSC building refurbishment
May 2025	Project consultation		
9 June		Tender invitations issued	
23 June	Council consider project including consultation responses, following consideration by PGF Committee. Approval to apply for loan		
27 June	Application for loan approval – currently approx. 15 working days		

Date	West Witney Project Funding	Phase 1 development - New build outdoor services depot	Phase 2 development - WWSSC building refurbishment
27 July			Tender invitations issued
8 August	Backstop date for loan approval. Funding secured.		
11 August		Tender submission deadline	
25 August		Building contract placed	
1 September		Building works commence	
27 October			Tender submission deadline
10 November		Building works complete	Building contract placed
17 Nov		Outdoor services depot operational	Building works commence
2026			
17 Mar.			Building works complete
30 Mar.			WWSSC re-opens

Members' approval of this timescale is requested.

In order to be able to afford the works the Council has previously agreed in principle to raise a loans for the works. Beyond the need to fund the works the arguments for doing this are strong. Councils are able to secure loans, typically from the PWLB, at advantageous rates and

Witney Town Council had a number of loans previously for capital works going back to 1974 when the Council was created and inherited loans from the previous Urban District Council. There were loans for the building of the Burwell Hall and for the West Witney Sports Ground.

Taking a loan has the impact of spreading the costs of creating or enhancing an asset over the period of life of that asset. This means that the costs do not fall unduly on the current Council taxpayers but are spread more fairly with those who will benefit in the future.

As part of the process to obtain loan approval the Council must consult on the project and the associated borrowing. Your officers recommend that this is undertaken over a four-week period, primarily “on-line” but with leaflets also being available. Key stakeholders would also be consulted. Members are requested to delegate the design and delivery of the consultation to the Town Clerk/ Chief Executive.

A further report will be presented to the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee at its meeting on 9 June 2025.

Impact Assessments

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council’s Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) Equality – no implications directly resulting from this report.
- b) Biodiversity - no implications directly resulting from this report.
- c) Crime & Disorder - no implications directly resulting from this report.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency - no implications directly resulting from this report.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

A risk register for this large project will be opened by the officers. There are clearly many risks which could lead to delay, poor or non-delivery. These risks are managed by competent staff, the employment of specialists as appropriate and Council scrutiny.

Effective project planning reduces risk and consultation for the project is necessary for the loan application process.

Social Value

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates. The West Witney Project will add social value through improved leisure and sporting facilities and gives the scope for further improvements in the future.

Financial implications

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report as the Council has already agreed the budgets for this Project. The public consultation is necessary to deliver a major element of the funding required.

Recommendations

Members are invited to:

1. Approve this report.
2. Approve the West Witney Project timetable.
3. Undertake public consultation on the West Witney Project and the associated borrowing and to delegate the design and delivery of the consultation to the Town Clerk/ Chief Executive.