

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

**Held on Monday, 18 November 2019**

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

**Present:**

Councillor L Ashbourne (Chair)

Councillors:	J Aitman O Collins D Enright	V Gwatkin R Smith
Officers:	Nicky Cayley Sharon Groth John Hickman Polly Inness Angus Whitburn	Democratic Services Officer Town Clerk Operations & Estates Officer Communications & Events Officer Compliance and Environment Officer
Others:	4 members of the public.	

SC450 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for their absence were received from Cllrs Bolger and King.

SC451 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Ashbourne declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 8 as she was a volunteer for West Oxfordshire Community Transport; Cllr Enright declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 8 as he was a member of West Oxfordshire Community Transport and Cllr Aitman declared an interest in the same item as she was the Town Council representative for West Oxfordshire Community Transport.

SC452 **MINUTES**

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the meeting held on the 16 September 2019.

**RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the meeting held on 16 September 2019 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair with the following amendments:

Cllr J Aitman to be added to list of attendees;

Minute 371, Resolution 2: the addition of “and a pesticides policy should be written”.

SC453 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

The Committee adjourned so that Members of the Youth Council and Margaret Burden, on behalf of West Oxfordshire Community Transport (WOCT), could address the Committee.

*The Committee reconvened after the public participation.*

SC454 **WEST OXFORDSHIRE COMMUNITY TRANSPORT**

This item was moved up the agenda with the express permission from the Chair, so that Margaret Burden could hear the discussion. The Town Clerk explained that any grant given for a period of years would give the bus service security, but would also assist the Town Council in its budget setting.

**RECOMMENDED:** that the Town Council increases its annual grant to West Oxfordshire Community Transport to £21,000 per annum for a period of three years commencing in 2020/21.

SC455 **OFFICER'S WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee received and considered the Officers' Schedule of Work. The Town Clerk was pleased to advise that some items were now complete.

A member asked where the bus shelter that was moving from Marriott's Walk to Market Square would be sited. The Operations and Estates Officer explained that unfortunately it was not in a condition to withstand moving.

Another member asked for an update on the bus shelter art. The Communications and Events Officer replied that it was ready but she had not had time to action it yet.

Another member asked about the possibility of additional grit bins and the Land Army being able to help regarding snow clearance. The Town Clerk said that she would speak to the relevant County Council officer.

A member asked what was happening with the bench at Oxlease following the resident's request. The Operations and Estates Officer advised that Cottsway who owned the land had agreed in principle but wanted to know what the Town Council would do to deter anti-social behaviour (ASB). It was highly likely that ASB would occur due to the location. Members discussed this and agreed that Cottsway should be written to and have it explained that if the bench did cause any problems, it would be removed.

**RESOLVED:**

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the bench at Blakes Avenue be sited in the agreed location and that Cottsway informed that if there were incidences of ASB, the bench could be removed.

SC456 **OPERATIONAL REPORT - PROGRESS SINCE LAST MEETING**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations and Estates Officer.

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

SC457 **STREET FURNITURE AND INFRASTRUCTURE**

The Chair and Cllrs Collins, Enright and Aitman gave a verbal update on the art project relating to the Street Piano, which was recently undertaken in conjunction with students from Abingdon & Witney College.

Members discussed the proposed designs from the college students - which had been reduced to four final options - and agreed to proceed with the “planets and flowers design”. They discussed potential sites for the piano and it was suggested that the SOTA Gallery might be a suitable place.

**RESOLVED:**

1. that the verbal report be noted;
2. that the Mayor approaches the SOTA Gallery to ask if they would be happy to have the Community Piano outside their shop and if they would store it overnight;
3. that a trolley be purchased (preferably second hand) up to a maximum budget of £200;
4. that the Mayor informs the College of the winning designs – planets and flowers;
5. that the Mayor also asks the SOTA Gallery if it would display the artwork of the finalists.

SC458 **ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR AND VANDALISM**

a) Vandalism Report – Operations and Estates Officer

Members received and considered an updated vandalism report from the Operations and Estates Officer.

b) Youth Have Your Say 2020

The Committee received and considered a verbal report from the Town Clerk, in which she explained the history behind the Youth Have Your Say events, run by Thames Valley Police and the Community Safety Partnership. There was a desire to hold one in 2020 and the Town Council had the opportunity to support this by offering free use of the Corn Exchange.

c) Anti-social Behaviour in the Town

The Town Clerk provided a verbal update, including that she had been to a multi-agency meeting on 22 October 2019. The Police had produced a report outlining things that could happen to tackle this. Hopefully a mobile CCTV camera would be stationed at The Leys soon. Although the ASB was a seasonal problem, the Council needed to prepare for next year when the weather improved and the nights were lighter. There would be a follow up meeting in December.

The Chair commented that whilst the original intent had been to have a public meeting on ASB, she proposed that the Annual Town meeting could have this as its focus. All members felt this was a good idea, as the police would be in attendance too.

**RECOMMENDED:**

- a) that the report on vandalism from the Operations and Estates Officer be noted;

- b) that the Town Clerk's verbal report be noted and that Town Council supports the Youth Have Your Say 2020 event by granting TVP/Community Safety Partnership free use of the Corn Exchange on 13 March 2020;
- c) that the verbal update from the Town Clerk be noted and that rather than hosting a meeting about ASB, this is made the focus of the Annual Town Meeting on 11 March 2020 and Aspire and Guideposts should be invited.

SC459 **GROUNDNS MAINTENANCE - TREES, FLORAL DISPLAYS AND PESTICIDE POLICY**

a) Trees

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations and Estates Officer, in which he reported that the Council's Tree Surgeon had advised that it was not possible to reduce the canopy of trees to get better air flow to the West Witney Bowls Green. There followed a discussion on why trees needed to be removed and agreed that whilst three trees would be removed, six trees would be replanted elsewhere. The other items of work were agreed.

b) Church Green and Welch Way Commemorative Bed – Planting Scheme

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations and Estates Officer, concerning a change to the make-up of planting and the condition of the raised bed at Welch Way.

c) Pesticide Policy

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations and Estates Officer, with a policy for sports pitches. The policy for the whole town would be brought to the next meeting.

**RECOMMENDED:**

- a)
  - i) that the report of the Operations and Estates Officer be noted and that an additional sum of £3,995 be added to the arboriculture budget to deal with the major deadwood etc. within the tree belt at West Witney;
  - ii) that three trees to the southern side of West Witney Bowls Green be removed with 6 trees to be planted elsewhere as a replacement.
- b)
  - i) that the report be noted;
  - ii) that a supplementary estimate of £5,210.35 be provided from the general reserve to re-construct the raised bed on Welch Way;
  - iii) that an annual sum of £2,000 for 5 years be set aside for the future reconstruction of this bed in stone, with the Operations and Estates Officer obtaining quotes for this work;
  - iv) that the planting of the beds on Church Green be changed to 50% perennial and 50% shrubs.
- c) that the report of the Operations and Estates Officer be noted and that the full pesticides policy for non-sporting areas is brought to the next meeting.

SC460 **COMMUNITY CLEAN UP**

The Committee received and considered communication from West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) concerning a grant from Central Government for cleaning up the community. Whilst examples of what the money could be spent on included items such as litter pickers and high visibility jackets, a member had spoken to a number of volunteer groups who confirmed that they already had such items. The Town Clerk agreed to speak to WODC to see what else the money could be spent on – e.g. pressure washers.

**RESOLVED:** that the Town Clerk seeks clarification from WODC to ascertain exactly what the grant could be spent on.

SC461 **COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE**

The Committee received and considered an updated report of press coverage and the report of the Communications and Events Officer on web accessibility.

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

SC462 **SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 48 A**

**RESOLVED:** that Standing Order 48a) be suspended in order to allow the meeting to continue as it had now lasted for two hours.

SC463 **EVENTS REPORT**

a) Third Party Events

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations and Estates Officer concerning third party events on The Leys.

b) Civic and Community Events

The Committee received and considered the report of the Communications and Events officer containing ideas for civic and community events.

c) Community Christmas Meal

Cllr Smith provided members with a verbal update on the plans for the Community Christmas Meal and asked if the Council would support the initiative by offering free use of the Corn Exchange.

**RECOMMENDED:**

- a) that the Operations & Estates Officer's report on third party events be noted;
- b) i) that the report of the Communications & Events Officer be noted;  
ii) that the Communications and Events Officer circulates three possible dates to members for a Lake and Country Park Trail and Story Telling Day;

- iii) that a Climate Emergency Update Meeting is not needed as public were attending the Working Party meetings;
  - iv) that the Youth Council are supported by the Town Council and Councillors for their Climate Change Event on Church Green;
  - v) that the Communications and Events Officers undertakes research into successful car free days in order to ascertain whether road closures would be necessary;
  - vi) that a £1, 000 budget is set up for Car Free Day 2020;
  - vii) that a budget of £250 be set up for a Secular Festive Event for 2020;
  - viii) that the Town Council advertises for a Community Group to facilitate/run a Big Lunch on 6 – 7 June 2020;
- c) that the update on the Community Christmas meal from Cllr Smith be noted and that free use of the Corn Exchange for the event be agreed.

SC464 **ONE WITNEY VISION: RESIDENTS SURVEY**

The Committee received and considered the draft strategic plan produced by Cllrs Gwatkin and Ashbourne. The Town Clerk commented she had some concerns about the wording in its current form, particularly as it encompassed things that were outside the remit of the Town Council. It was agreed that she would work on rewording some sections with Cllrs Ashbourne and Gwatkin. Once this has been done the Communications and Events Officer would translate it into an online survey and issue a press release.

**RESOLVED:**

1. that the Draft Strategic Plan 2019 -2023 be noted;
2. that Cllrs Ashbourne and Gwatkin work with the Town Clerk to reword some sections of the plan;
3. that the Communications and Events Officer translates the strategic plan into a Survey Monkey survey and issues a press release to launch this.

SC465 **TOWN CENTRE SHOPS**

The Committee discussed the state of the high street in terms of local businesses as several shops had closed and more were expected. The Chair advised that this item had been put onto the agenda because District Councillor Andrew Coles had asked the Town Council to support a Small Business Saturday. The Town Clerk pointed out that the District Council employed a Business Development Officer. As business development was not under the Town Council's remit or control, it was agreed to write to the District Council's Business Development Officer asking that the District Council supports small businesses as much as possible.

**RESOLVED:** that the Town Council writes a letter to WODC's Business Development Officer explaining that the Town Council would like to see the District Council supporting the town's independent businesses more.

SC466 **CHRISTMAS SUB COMMITTEE**

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the Christmas Sub Committee held on 21 October 2019.

**RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the Christmas Sub Committee be noted, and the recommendations contained therein be provided with the following amendment to minute X421, recommendation 2:

Add in "and solar powered options" after "timers".

SC467 **CLIMATE AND BIODIVERSITY SUB COMMITTEE MINUTES**

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the Climate and Biodiversity Sub Committee held on 6 November 2019.

**RESOLVED:** that the minutes be noted, and the recommendations contained therein be approved.

SC468 **TWINNING MINUTES**

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the Witney & District Twinning Association held on 2 October 2019 and a request for a grant towards their Anniversary Celebrations in 2020.

**RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the meeting be noted and that a grant of £1,000 plus free use of the Corn Exchange is given towards the Anniversary Celebrations in 2020.

SC469 **FINANCE REPORT - REVISED BUDGET 2019/20 AND PROPOSED BUDGET 2020/21**

a) Revised revenue budget 2019/20 and base revenue budget for 2020/21

The Town Clerk circulated her report on the revised revenue budget for the current year and the first draft of the budget proposed for 2020/21 at the meeting. She explained that the adoption of this year's budget was regrettably having to be put back due to time constraints and for personal reasons.

b) Revised Capital & Special Revenue Projects Programme 2019/20

The Town Clerk circulated a schedule of the position relating to the current years capital and special revenue projects for this committee.

c) Revenue Growth Items and Capital/Special Revenue Projects Programme 2020/21 and beyond

The Town Clerk circulated a schedule of projects put forward for this committee's consideration, although some had not been costed out. She invited Members to let her know of any other projects which should be included.

**RESOLVED:**

1. that the revised budget for 2019/20 and the first draft of the proposed budget for 2020/21 be noted;
2. that the progress of the revised capital and special revenue projects programme for 2019/20 be noted;
3. that items for the capital and special revenue projects programme for 2020/21 and beyond be noted.

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The meeting closed at: 9.00 pm

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Chair