

ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING OF
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Wednesday, 7 May 2025

At 7.01 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney

Present:

Councillor A Bailey (Chair)

Councillors:	J Aitman	D Temple
	O Collins	G Doughty
	R Smith	J Doughty
	R Crouch	J Robertshaw
	D Newcombe	D Edwards-Hughes
	D Enright	T Ashby
	S Simpson	A Mubin
Officers:	Adam Clapton	Deputy Town Clerk
	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
	Sharon Groth	Town Clerk
	Nigel Warner	Responsible Financial Officer
Others:	9 members of the public.	

Prior to the commencement of the official business the outgoing Mayor Cllr O Collins thanked all that had provided support to him during the two years he had held the position and provided a summary of activities he had participated in.

Following this the Reverend Dr Hester Jones blessed the Town Council for the year ahead.

241 ELECTION OF TOWN MAYOR 2025/26

Following the appointment of Cllr A Bailey as Mayor-Elect at the meeting of the Council on 14 April 2025, the Chair invited any further nominations for the position of Town Mayor for the ensuing municipal year and none were forthcoming.

All members were in agreement. Cllr A Bailey was therefore nominated and duly elected Chair/Mayor by the Council.

Resolved:

1. That, Cllr Andy Bailey be elected Town Mayor/Chair of Witney Town Council for the ensuing municipal year 2025/26 and,
2. That, the Declaration of Acceptance of Office be signed following the meeting in the presence of the Proper Officer of the Council.

242 **ELECTION OF DEPUTY MAYOR 2025/26**

The new Chair invited nominations for the position of Deputy Town Mayor for the ensuing municipal year. Cllr J Doughty was nominated and duly elected Deputy Mayor by the Council.

Resolved:

1. That, Cllr Jane Doughty be elected Deputy Town Mayor/Chair of Witney Town Council for the ensuing municipal year 2025/26 and,
2. That, the Declaration of Acceptance of Office be signed following the meeting in the presence of the Proper Officer of the Council.

243 **DESIGNATION OF MAYOR'S CHAPLAIN**

Following her appointment to the position of Team Rector of the parish, Members officially welcomed Rev'd Dr Hester Jones to Witney. The Rector was usually appointed Mayor's Chaplain and provided pastoral and ecclesiastical guidance to the Mayor and the Town Council.

Resolved:

That, Rev'd Dr Hester Jones be designated Mayor's Chaplain.

244 **ELECTION OF LEADER 2025/26**

The Chair invited nominations for the position of Leader of the Town Council. Cllr R Smith was nominated and elected by the Council.

Resolved:

That, Cllr Ruth Smith be elected as the Leader of the Town Council for the ensuing municipal year 2025/26.

Eight Members of the Public left the meeting at 7:19pm

245 **ELECTION OF DEPUTY LEADER 2025/26**

The Chair invited nominations for the position of Deputy Leader of the Town Council. Cllr J Aitman was nominated and elected by the Council.

Resolved:

That, Cllr Joy Aitman be elected as the Deputy Leader of the Town Council for the ensuing municipal year 2024/25

246 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Treloar and G Meadows.

247 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest from Members or Officers.

At this point in the meeting, and with the permission of the Chair, the Town Clerk/CEO addressed the Council regarding recent conduct concerns, particularly highlighting three complaints stemming from social media activity around the Oxfordshire County Council elections. The Town Clerk emphasised that such incidents negatively impacted staff wellbeing, divert resources from Council priorities, and damage the Council's collective reputation. Members were reminded of their commitment to the Civility and Respect pledge adopted in October 2022 and were urged to revisit the Councillor Code of Conduct which was reviewed at agenda item 16(c). The Town Clerk encouraged participation in available training and stressed that public service required Members to maintain appropriate conduct in all interactions, including online communications in order to foster a respectful working environment and preserve public trust.

248 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the ordinary Council meeting held on 14 April 2025 were received.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Council meeting held on 14 April 2025 be approved as a correct record of the meetings and be signed by the Chair.

249 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

250 **APPOINTMENT OF ANY NEW COMMITTEES**

The Council received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk which provided details of the current Council Committees.

Members discussed the proposed separation of the Climate, Biodiversity & Planning Committee and agreed on the establishment of a new Climate & Biodiversity Committee along with a Planning & Development Committee. This would allow the Council to focus on its target of being carbon neutral by 2028.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, separate Climate & Biodiversity and Planning & Development Committees be established.

251 **ADOPTION OF MEETINGS CALENDAR**

The Council received the updated proposed calendar of meetings, including changes to incorporate the newly established Climate & Biodiversity Committee.

Resolved:

1. That, the calendar of Council meetings for 2025/26 be adopted.

252 **REVIEW (OR REQUEST FOR THE TOWN CLERK TO REVIEW) ANY TERMS OF REFERENCE**

There were no changes to the current Terms of Reference for Committees as changes to the structure had been proposed at this meeting. Members were advised each committee would also have the opportunity to review their remits at their first meetings.

253 **SCHEME OF DELEGATION**

As changes to Committees had been proposed, officers advised this item would be deferred to the next meeting.

Resolved:

That, the Scheme of delegation be reviewed at the meeting of the Council on 23 June 2025.

254 **APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES, SUB-COMMITTEES & WORKING PARTIES AND THE ELECTION OF CHAIRS**

Members received the report of the Deputy Town Clerk and considered appointments to standing committees, sub committees, working parties and task & finish groups. In addition, the Chairs were also elected at this juncture. The following appointments were proposed, seconded, and agreed unanimously:

Planning & Development Committee

G Doughty (Chair)	D Temple
J Aitman	G Meadows
J Doughty	R Smith

Climate & Biodiversity Committee

S Simpson (Chair)	D Newcombe
D Enright	A Bailey
A Mubin	R Smith
J Treloar	J Robertshaw

Parks & Recreation Committee

J Aitman (Chair)	J Doughty
D Edwards- Hughes	S Simpson
J Treloar	R Smith
T Ashby	A Bailey

Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments

R Crouch (Chair)	J Treloar
G Doughty	D Temple
J Robertshaw	R Smith
A Bailey	O Collins

Stronger Communities Committee

T Ashby (Chair)	D Enright
G Meadows	A Bailey
R Smith	A Mubin
D Edwards-Hughes	J Treloar

Policy Governance And Finance Committee

R Smith (Chair)	A Bailey
J Aitman	R Crouch
S Simpson	G Doughty
T Ashby	J Doughty

Personnel Sub- Committee

R Smith (Chair)	A Bailey
J Aitman	R Crouch
D Newcombe	G Doughty
T Ashby	J Doughty

Disciplinary & Grievance Panel

D Enright	O Collins
T Ashby	D Temple

Community Voices (was Inclusivity & Diversity Panel)

R Smith	T Ashby
J Aitman	R Crouch
S Simpson	G Doughty

VE/VJ-Day 80th Anniversaries Task & Finish Group

J Robertshaw	J Treloar
J Aitman	O Collins
G Meadows	R Crouch

Community Governance Task & Finish Group

O Collins	R Smith
A Bailey	G Meadows
S Simpson	R Crouch
D Edwards-Hughes	

Pavilion Working Party

R Crouch	D Newcombe
R Smith	G Doughty
J Aitman	

Members unanimously agreed that the Christmas Lights Working Party and Youth Council Task & Finish Groups could be disbanded as their tasks had been successfully completed.

Resolved:

1. That the report be noted and,
2. That the membership of the standing committees, sub committees, working parties and task & finish groups and their Chairs be agreed as detailed above and,
3. That the Christmas Lights Working Party and Youth Council Task & Finish Group be disbanded.

Cllr T Ashby left the meeting at 7:34pm.

255 **APPOINTMENT TO ADVISORY COMMITTEES & EXTERNAL BODIES/OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS**

The Council received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk concerning nominations for advisory committees and external bodies/outside organisations.

The Chair sought nominations for vacancies on outside organisations all to serve until the Annual Council Meeting following the next ordinary election in 2027.

Witney Traffic Advisory Committee	J Aitman, D Enright S Simpson R Smith
Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils [Larger Councils]	R Crouch
West Witney Sports & Social Club	D Newcombe R Smith
Witney Town Band	O Collins
Witney & District Twinning Association	A Bailey (Mayor) R Crouch R Smith
West Oxfordshire Museum Centre	O Collins
St Mary's Church Preservation Trust	A Bailey (Mayor)
Volunteer Link Up	J Aitman
RAF Brize Norton – Local Consultation Working Group	D Newcombe
Witney Allotment Association	R Crouch

Witney Youth Council Mentors	G Meadows S Simpson J Aitman
Friends of the Cemeteries	D Enright J Doughty
Home Start Champions	J Aitman A Bailey S Simpson
Lower Windrush Valley Project	A Bailey
West Oxfordshire Community Transport	D Enright
Witney Fair Trade Action Group Champion	R Smith
Witney Infrastructure Neighbourhood Group	R Smith D Enright
Witney Community Profile Steering Group	J Aitman
Witney Flood Group Liaison	J Robertshaw

Nominees Serving as Trustees

The following were proposed as Town Council nominees to serve on outside bodies for a four-year term of office.

Witney Town Hall Charity	Mr H Eaglestone
Witney Town Charity	Cllr J Aitman
Witney Education Foundation (WEF)	Cllr S Simpson

Resolved:

1. That the report be noted and,
2. That the appointments to advisory committees & external bodies/outside nominations be agreed as detailed above.

256 **STANDING ORDERS**

The Council received the report of the Deputy Town Clerk which outlined the updating and significant redesign based on the National Association of Local Council's 2025 model version.

The updates referred to sections on code of conduct and financial controls; the remaining information was updated wording but by adopting these Standing Orders the Council would remain compliant with legislation.

Members unanimously agreed to approve the proposed changes and adjourn them until the meeting of the Council on 23 June 2025 in order to allow sufficient time for Members to review and reflect on the revisions before discussing further.

In response to a Member's question, the Town Clerk advised Councillors of the difference in voting rights if attending as a substitute or a guest of a Committee.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, that the proposed standing orders be approved but stand adjourned until the meeting of the Full Council on 23 June 2025.

257 **FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

The Deputy Town Clerk advised the Council's financial regulations had been reviewed by the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee on 14th April and stood adjourned for adoption at the meeting on 9 June 2025.

Resolved:

That, the Council note that the current Financial Regulations are under review and stand adjourned until the meeting of the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee on 9 June 2025.

258 **CODE OF CONDUCT**

The Council received the Councils Current Code of Conduct and unanimously agreed that it should be reaffirmed.

Resolved:

That, the Council's Code of Conduct be re-adopted.

259 **COUNCILLOR ATTENDANCE 2024-25**

The Council received an annual attendance register for Members of the Council for the 2024/25 municipal year.

The Leader of the Council along with Cllr D Edwards-Hughes thanked Members for their attendances and highlighted that it should be understood when viewing such figures that many factors influenced an individual Councillor's attendance such as illness and family or dependent commitments.

Resolved:

That, the annual attendance registers for 2024/25 be noted.

The meeting closed at: 7.55 pm

Chair