

**HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

Held on Monday, 19 May 2025

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

Present:

Councillor R Crouch (Chair)

Councillors:	J Treloar	G Doughty
	J Robertshaw	D Temple
	R Smith	G Meadows (In place of O Collins)
	A Bailey	
Officers:	Sharon Groth	Town Clerk
	Adam Clapton	Deputy Town Clerk
	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
	Angus Whitburn	Operations Manager
	Thomas Davies	Deputy Venue & Events Officer
Others:	None.	

H279 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor O Collins, Councillor G Meadows attended as a substitute.

H280 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members or Officers.

H281 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

The Chair called for nominations for the position of Vice-Chair of the Committee.

It was proposed and seconded that Councillor J Treloar or O Collins be elected. There being no other nominations a vote was taken. The result being unanimous in favour of Councillor Treloar.

Resolved:

That, Councillor J Treloar be elected Vice-Chair of the Committee for the 2025/26 municipal year.

H282 MINUTES

The minutes of the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee meeting held on 17 March 2025 were received.

H154 – The Town Clerk reported that Witney Allotment Association had been written to requesting that they update their waiting list. Whilst a response had been received from WAA North a response was awaited from the overarching WAA Committee detailing the full position of all allotment sites

Resolved:

1. That, the verbal update be noted and,
2. That, the minutes of the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee meeting held on 17 March 2025 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

H283 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Committee adjourned for this item.

The Committee received representations from two members of Witney Allotment Association South Sub-Committee concerning Agenda Item 11.

The Town Clerk read a statement forwarded by the Site Representative of Lakeside Allotments which detailed their thoughts on the officer's report to be considered under agenda item 11.

Additionally, the allotment members present thanked the Committee for their consideration of the options regarding flooding at Lakeside allotments.

The Committee reconvened.

H284 LAKESIDE FLOODING OPTIONS

With the permission of the Chair, the item was moved up the agenda so that the members of public present could hear the discussion and outcome.

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations Manager as well as hearing earlier the words of the Site Representative for Lakeside Allotments and the two Members of WWA-South who were present.

Following on, Members discussed the specifics of the proposals with questions regarding the layout, ditch orientation and flow levels of the various water courses being answered by the Operations Manager.

Although the Committee sympathised with the allotment holders' frustration about flooding, potentially involving sewage water, it was mutually agreed by all present that the allotments were situated on a flood plain. There was no simple or inexpensive solution to the issue which had appeared to worsen in recent years. Some plots were unusable in the winter, and the viability of the soil and the longevity of any mitigation was unknown.

The Committee was unanimous in agreement to decline both recommendations in the report in favour of alternative proposals.

It was therefore proposed by Cllr A Bailey and seconded by Cllr J Treloar that the Council developed a strategy to engage with Thames Water and other interested parties to review the

issues being experienced. In particular a request be made to Windrush Against Sewage Pollution to provide the historical flow rates of Colwell Brook. Members were unanimous in support.

Additionally, Members further agreed to review an earlier topographical survey regarding hydrology movement. If any further survey work was found to be needed, then Officers should review and report back to the Committee.

Recommended:

1. That, the report and verbal contributions be noted and,
2. That, a strategy be developed to engage with Thames Water and interested parties and,
3. That, Officers investigate any additional hydrology survey work that may be required.

The Members of the public left the meeting along with the Operations Manager at 6:45pm

H285 **THE EQUALITY & HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION (EHRC) CONSULTATION - TOILET PROVISION IN PUBLIC HALLS**

With the permission of the Chair, the item was moved up the agenda.

The Committee had been asked to note the intention that EHRC were imminently to issue a public consultation following the Supreme Court ruling on the definition of "sex" under the Equality Act 2010 and to consider any implications for the provision of single-sex and staff toilet facilities at the Corn Exchange and other public halls.

A Member raised that these changes were mandatory for public bodies however, felt that Witney Town Council should highlight its concerns with regards to the practicalities of introducing changes.

The Committee was concerned that it was overreach to include toilet provisions in the guidance however, a solution to change the use of the disabled toilet would meet the requirements of the court ruling but it was a person's right to choose their sex, and it should not be viewed as a disability.

Cllr G Meadows proposed, and Cllr R Smith seconded that the Council consult with LGBTQ & disabled communities, who would be affected by the additional use of the designated toilet, prior to submission of a response from Witney Town Council by the Mayor, Leader of the Council, Cllr Meadows and Town Clerk. The Committee were unanimous in agreement with the proposal.

Recommended:

1. That, the Council enter a submission to highlight their concerns the formation of which be delegated to the Mayor, Leader, Cllr Meadows and the Town Clerk; and
2. That, the Council consult with groups prior to help inform its response.

Cllr A Bailey left the meeting at 7:05pm

H286 **COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk.

It was proposed by Cllr R Smith, seconded by Cllr J Robertshaw that the following recommended changes to the current Terms of Reference be made.

- (e) To oversee the management of Hailey Road, Lakeside, Newland and Windrush Place Allotments whilst leased to the Witney Allotment Association.

And that additionally the following new Terms of Reference be included:

- To oversee the development and management of the Corn Exchange (including the 1863 café bar) as a community hub and arts centre in line with the Council's vision and long-term business plan for the venue.
- Within all its decision making ensure that the green environment and biodiversity of public open spaces is protected and enhanced in line with the Council's Climate Emergency aspirations.
- To oversee any development and investment in Council-owned public halls, and the supporting infrastructure, ensuring they meet the needs of the community, remain safe and compliant.

Members were unanimous in agreement of the proposed changes.

Recommended:

1. That, the changes as noted above be made to the Terms of Reference and,
2. That, those changes be approved at the meeting of the Council on 23rd June 2025.

H287 **COMMITTEE OBJECTIVES & WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR**

The Committee received the detailed report of the Town Clerk/CEO along with a verbal update concerning the Committee Objectives & Work Plan for 2025/26.

No additional objectives or changes were request by Members.

Resolved:

That, the Committee Objectives & Work Plan for 2025/26 be noted.

H288 **PUBLIC HALLS REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of new Venue & Events Officer and offered him their best wishes.

The V&EO answered Members' questions which related to clarification of the maintenance of the charity clothes bank at Burwell Hall as well as outlining the need for changes to the Corn Exchange flag design to ensure these were more robust.

He further explained the importance of attendance from Councillors at the Advent Fayre on the 30 November in order that it could proceed without additional costs of staffing being incurred.

The Leader of the Council supported the V&EO comments and asked that all Councillor be written to highlight the importance of their support.

Resolved:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, all Councillors are advised of the Advent Fayre date and their need to support the event and,
3. That, Officers proceed with the recommendations to alter the style of banner.

H289 **CORN EXCHANGE BUSINESS REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Venue & Events Officer which provided an update on the activity of the Corn Exchange events.

Members were pleased to receive the updated data on the attendance figures as requested by them previously and to hear of new events that were being established. including the summer outdoor music events which would return in conjunction with the fizzy Friday promotion.

The Committee expressed their thanks to the events staff for the hard work to ensure the 80th anniversary VE Day celebrations were delivered smoothly.

Resolved:

That, the report and verbal update be noted.

The meeting closed at: 7.25 pm

Chair