

**CLIMATE ACTION WORKING PARTY MEETING OF THE
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

Held on Tuesday, 22 July 2025

At 4.00 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney

Present:

Councillor S Simpson (Chair)

Councillors:	J Aitman	J Doughty (In place of J Robertshaw)
	D Edwards-Hughes	R Crouch (In place of D Enright)
Officers:	Sharon Groth	Town Clerk
	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
	Janine Sparrowhawk	Compliance & Environment Officer
Others:	None	

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Enright & J Robertshaw, Councillors R Crouch & J Doughty attended as substitutes respectively.

2 ELECTION OF CHAIR

It was proposed and seconded that Councillor S Simpson be elected. There being no other nominations it was:

Resolved:

That, Councillor Sandra Simpson be elected Chair of the Working Party for the 2025/26 municipal year.

3 TERMS OF REFERENCE

The draft Terms of Reference were received and considered and any amendments considered.

Members recognised the impending 2028 deadline originally set in June 2019 for the Council to achieve a target of carbon neutrality and therefore, welcomed the resurrection of a Working Party, including the phased timeframe in the terms of reference which would assist in focusing on those goals.

The Working Party welcomed the focus and hoped their recommendations would assist the work of the Council's Climate & Biodiversity Committee.

It was requested that two small amendments be made with the insertion of "gardens" so that the objective in Phase two read – Witney Allotments and Community Orchards & Gardens.

Additionally, it was suggested that the word “neither” be added to strengthen the line advising that the Working Party or its Members were not able to make decisions and only recommendations to the Climate & Biodiversity Committee or Full Council.

Members were unanimous in agreement to both amendments.

Recommended:

That, amendments be made to the Terms of Reference as noted above.

4 **CLIMATE CHANGE ROAD MAP**

Baseline Report

Members requested a baseline report to measure progress since the Town Council declared a climate emergency in June 2019. The Town Clerk advised that progress updates had been presented to the Full Council as the original plan evolved. However, it was agreed that a summary of historical information would provide the Working Party with a clear starting point.

Key milestones were agreed as follows:

- Draft Roadmap plan to be ready in time for the commencement of the budget setting period on 6th October 2025
- Final Road Map Plan to be presented to the meeting of the Council on 16th February 2026

Carbon Building Audit

Substantial work would follow to compile a carbon audit of council-owned buildings before the draft plan was presented in October. The audit would be conducted with the support of Energy Solutions Oxfordshire, who previously completed a report for Burwell Hall. As their assessments were currently free for community buildings, the following actions were planned:

- **Revise the existing Burwell Hall report (free)**
- **Conduct a new audit for the Corn Exchange (free)**
- **Complete audits for the Town Hall and Admin Office (paid for)**, ensuring all council-owned buildings are assessed.

Members also suggested including Madley Park Hall and Langdale Hall, however the Town Clerk advised prioritising the Town Hall and Admin Office. The other two properties are leased and could be assessed at a later stage when budgeting allowed.

Council Vehicle Fleet

It was agreed that the Works Team vehicle fleet be reviewed in collaboration with the Operations Manager to:

- Evaluate the current vehicle renewal programme
- Discuss potential upgrades and replacements
- Incorporate necessary changes into future budget planning

It was also noted that **£10,000 of matched funding from Energy Solutions Oxfordshire** may be available to support this work.

New Council Facilities

Members queried whether the upcoming capital projects at West Witney would be carbon neutral. The Project Officer would be bringing reports detailing carbon reduction measures for these facilities. These reports would be submitted to the Climate & Biodiversity Committee when available.

Phase 2 Actions

Future actions would focus on:

- **Review and updating Council policies including the events and hire policy** to include stronger sustainability measures
- **Encouraging recycling by event hirers**
- **Collaborating with Café 1863** to increase the use of recyclable products

Carbon Literacy Training

The Compliance and Environmental Officer encouraged Members who also served on West Oxfordshire District Council to advocate for the inclusion of Town Council staff and councillors in the District Council's carbon literacy training. This could include:

- Access to training materials
- Participation in existing training sessions

This initiative would align with the shared goal of collaboration among the three tiers of local government.

Town Council Website

It was proposed that the Climate Emergency page on the Council's website be updated. The current content dates back to 2019. Recommendations include:

- Streamlining the page into a single, concise resource
- Including links to external organisations offering climate change information and support
- Ensuring content remained up to date and easy to navigate

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, a draft roadmap for the climate action plan should be ready in time for the commencement of the budget setting period on 6th October 2025 and,
3. That, the final roadmap for the climate action plan should be presented to the meeting of the Council on 16th February 2026 and,
4. That, carbon building audits should be conducted for Burwell Hall, Corn Exchange, Town Hall and the Council's Reception/Administrative Office, the latter two being funded from existing budgets or EMR's and,
5. That the Work Team vehicle fleet be reviewed in collaboration with the Operations Manager and,
6. That, WODC Councillors approach officers concerning the possibility of extended carbon literacy training and,
7. That, Members research climate change websites and feedback suggestions at the next meeting.

5

CLIMATE FAIR

Event Date

Members were updated that the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee had approved the subsidised use of the Corn Exchange for the Climate Fair at their meeting on 21st July 2025.

Following discussion, Members agreed that holding the event on a Thursday would encourage participation from both partner organisations and stakeholders as well as the intended public audience

It was agreed that the event be scheduled to take place on Thursday, 9th October 2025.

Partner Organisation Engagement

Promotion of the Witney Town Council FLIR camera should be a focus of the event. However, to maximise engagement, members support would be needed ahead of the event, particularly in:

- Providing real-life testimonials about using the FLIR camera
- Sharing their experiences to encourage public interest

Invitees and Participants

An initial list of invitees had been compiled. Additional suggestions for attendees included:

- **Local press/media outlets**
- **Local sustainable businesses**
- **West Oxfordshire District Council** to be encouraged to include a focus on recycling initiatives
- **Witney Fairtrade**
- **Forest School organisations**
- **Climate Action Groups**, the Chair to provide additional contact point to Officers
- **Charity shops**
- **Zimbl EV car hire service**, recently promoted by another local authority

Members were asked to submit any further suggestions for potential invitees to the Compliance and Environmental Officer.

Future Planning

It was proposed that, if the event was successful, future Climate Fairs could include talks or workshops from key partner organisations to further educate and engage the community.

Low Carbon Hub Involvement

The Compliance and Events Officer noted that Low Carbon Hub currently held a three-year service agreement with West Oxfordshire District Council, indicating a substantial and ongoing investment. They were actively engaged in initiatives in Eynsham and could be invited to:

- Focus efforts on projects in Witney
- Potentially bring budgetary benefits and expertise to local initiatives

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the Climate Fair event is scheduled for Thursday 9th October 2025 and,
3. That those on the list presented and those above be invited to take part on the day.

6 NEXT MEETING OF THE WORKING PARTY

The next meeting would be scheduled to take place between the Climate & Biodiversity Committee meeting on 9th September 2025 and the presentation of the draft Climate Roadmap to Full Council on 6th October 2025, which marks the beginning of the budget-setting process for the Council.

The meeting closed at: 5.25 pm

Chair