

**CLIMATE & BIODIVERSITY COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

Held on Tuesday, 20 May 2025

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

Present:

Councillor S Simpson (Chair)

Councillors:	D Enright	R Smith
	D Newcombe	J Treloar
	J Robertshaw	J Aitman (In place of D Enright)
Officers:	Adam Clapton	Deputy Town Clerk
	Sharon Groth	Town Clerk
	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
	Janine Sparrowhawk	Compliance & Environment Officer
	Carl Whitehead	Biodiversity & Green Spaces Officer
Others:	None.	

CB290 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Enright, A Bailey & A Mubin.

Councillors J Aitman, G Meadows and T Ashby attended as substitutes respectively.

CB291 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members or Officers.

CB292 ELECTION OF VICE-CHAIR

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

It was proposed by Councillor J Aitman and seconded by Councillor R Smith that Councillor D Enright be elected.

An additional proposal was made by Councillor J Treloar, seconded by Councillor T Ashby that Councillor J Robertshaw be elected.

There being no other nominations a vote was taken with the result being:

Councillor D Enright	Four Votes
Councillor J Robertshaw	Three Votes

There was one abstention.

Resolved:

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

CB293 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

CB294 COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Committee received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Council outlining the terms of reference for the Committee.

A Member requested that (f) be amended to include the word “Promote” and therefore read as:

(f) To explore and promote the expansion of community energy to keep the benefits of our local energy generation in our local economy.

Additionally, a Member asked that “Local Oxfordshire Organisations” be added to (d) and therefore read as:

(d) To engage with Central Government, West Oxfordshire District Council, Oxfordshire County Council, local Oxfordshire Organisations, relevant stake holders and other organisations to initiate local action on climate change (towards achieving net zero carbon emissions) air & water pollution, and other environmental issues within the town.

It was proposed by Cllr J Aitman, seconded by Cllr G Meadows that the terms of reference be adopted with the above amendments. Members were unanimous in agreement.

In response to a Member’s question, the Deputy Town Clerk confirmed that matters of Flooding mitigation would be dealt under the Planning & Development Committee’s Terms of reference as it was considered infrastructure. Flooding events and larger flooding issued would be referred to Full Council.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the Terms of Reference including the above suggested changes be recommended for approval by the Full Council at the meeting of 23 June 2025.

CB295 BIODIVERSITY & GREEN SPACES UPDATE

The Committee received a verbal update from the Biodiversity & Green Spaces Officer (B&GSO).

Members heard that the B&GSO was pleased to see the establishment of a dedicated Committee which he hoped would help to reinforce the work which had resulted in the award reorganisations the Council had received, these were in respect of the Lake & Country Park and further lead to greater opportunities for grant funding applications and for an application in early 2026 for local wildlife site status.

He updated the Committee regarding his and the newly promoted Park Ranger's recent progress and activity which included water testing, a furniture review, increase of noticeboard and information boards across the sites, greater volunteer interest, work to improve over 700 metres of pathway as well as having gained permission to raise pathways to reduce flooding risks.

The B&GSO responded to Members' questions regarding the results of the bank stabilisation work already carried out and that which was planned for the future, action taken and plans for the introduction of wildflower sites across the town, and ongoing water testing at the convergence of Colwell Brook and lake.

The offer of a walk with the B&SGO and Park Ranger was offered, Members agreed that this should be extended to all Councillors ideally to take place ahead of the Witney Carnival on 12th July so that Members were well informed.

The B&GSO confirmed that a written report would be submitted to the Committee at the next meeting.

Resolved:

1. That, the verbal update be noted and,
2. That, Officers to issue invites to Councillors to participate in a walk with the B&GSO and Park Ranger.

CB296 CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY & CLIMATE EMERGENCY ACTION PLAN

The Committee received and considered the report of the Compliance & Environment Officer (C&EO).

Members welcomed the summary report that had been provided and the Compliance & Environment Officer to the new role.

A Member raised concern of the cost of making retrofit and upgrades however recognised that a solid plan would allow the Council to plan effectively to strive to reach its goals.

In response to a Member's question regarding the promotion of schemes to benefit the community, the Deputy Town Clerk reminded the Committee of its remit and that as a Town Council the resources were limited however there was nothing stopping the Council promoting a wide scope of District, County and Government lead schemes to Witney residents and businesses as highlighted in Phase 3 & 4 of the roadmap provided by the C&EO.

The Chair raised the idea of hosting an event in the Council's buildings to facilitate and bring together community and support organisations in order to help educate and promote schemes and grant schemes that may be available.

Lastly, Members considered the recommendation to establish a working party in order to help expedite discussions with Officers who would be drafting the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan. It was agreed that an offer be made to all Council Members to join the working party at the next meeting of the Full Council.

Members were unanimous in agreement with all the recommendations made in the report.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, Officers produce a detailed roadmap following the completion of a Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan and,
3. That, the idea of a Climate roadshow event be investigated by Officers and,
4. That, a Climate Action Working Party be established, and its membership be agreed at the meeting of the Full Council on 23rd June 2025 and,
5. That, this Committee be provided with regular updates of the Working Party.

CB297 COMMITTEE OBJECTIVES & WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR

The Committee received the detailed report of the Town Clerk/CEO concerning the Committee Objectives & Work Plan for 20x25/26.

Members noted that the Objectives mirrored the report of the Compliance & Environment Officer and therefore outlined the major elements of the roadmap that the Committee should focus on.

The Committee were unanimous in acceptance of the recommendations which included the already agreed establishment of a Working Party.

Resolved:

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

The meeting closed at: 6.55 pm

Chair