

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

Held on Monday, 7 July 2025

At 6.02 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney

Present:

Councillor R Crouch (Chair)

Councillors:	J Robertshaw	D Temple
	R Smith	J Aitman (In place of A Bailey)
	O Collins	Doughty (In place of J Treloar)
	G Doughty	
Officers:	Sharon Groth	Town Clerk
	Adam Clapton	Deputy Town Clerk
	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
	Mark Lewis	Head of Estates & Operations
Others:	One member of the public.	

H396 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Treloar & A Bailey, with Councillors J Doughty & J Aitman attending retrospectively as substitutes.

H397 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members or Officers.

H398 MINUTES

The minutes of the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee meeting held on 19 May 2025 were received.

H284 – A Member clarified that the river flow rates were monitored by the Environment Agency.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee meeting held on 19 May 2025 be approved a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

H399 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Committee adjourned for this item.

The committee received representations from a representative of Holy Trinity Church, Woodgreen concerning Agenda Item 8.

Members heard of their concern of the size of an individual tree within the churchyard which they asked to be reviewed as it was a potential risk to the church building, the safety of parishioners and users of the green, including the children that used the adjacent playpark.

They also raised concerns regarding the recent removal of trees from West Oxfordshire District Council office site across the road from the church. Whilst this had not caused a disturbance to Sunday worship, it was the representatives understanding that tree removal in a conservation area could only be instructed by a West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC) tree officer of which nobody held that position at that time of the removal. They had requested a response some weeks previously from WODC however nothing had been forthcoming.

In closing they offered their thanks to the Operations Manager and his team for the excellent work in grass cutting regime which had led to biodiversity of the churchyard and the appearance of orchids and other wildflowers.

The Committee reconvened.

H400 **CLOSED CHURCHYARDS**

With the permission of the Chair, this item was moved up the agenda so the member of public could hear the discussion and outcome.

The Committee discussed the issues raised by the representative of Holy Trinity Church. Firstly the Chair, who also held a position as a WODC Councillor agreed she would follow up with Officers there to investigate and respond in respect to the issue of the removal of trees on their property.

Additionally, Members were unanimous in agreement that the Town Council's Operations Manager arrange a review of the trees under the remit of the Town Council in conjunction with the newly appointed WODC tree officer in order to address the church's concerns further.

Members were keen that it be expressed upon the WODC officers that one of the main reasons for the area being a conservation area is due to the location of the church itself.

Resolved:

1. That, Officers engage with the WODC tree Officer and liaise with the church and,
2. That, the Chair follow up with WODC Officers in respect of the church concerns of tree removal in a conservation area.

H401 **ANNUAL RESIDENTS SURVEY RESULTS**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk concerning the results of the resident's annual satisfaction survey which was held at the beginning of the year.

Members were advised the report represented the survey results for the services under the remit of this committee and showed the combined satisfactory and above percentages against poor ones. Previous years data was also included to help benchmark the results. The report also contained all unedited comments on the services.

The Committee discussed some of the comments made and reflected that many were relevant to individual residents some of which not able to be resolved as it would not be prudent use of Town Council funds.

Members agreed that Burwell Hall was potentially underutilised and that it should be promoted to highlight its availability as a cost effective venue. It was suggested that an Open Day event could be held as part of the promotion activity.

The Committee also discussed cycling along the St Mary's church path, an issue that had been highlighted by a resident by email to Officers prior to the meeting, it was agreed unanimously that Officers speak with Oxfordshire County Council to review signage to inform of this prohibited use by cyclists.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, Officers work with OCC to review the signage at St Mary's Church and,
3. That, Officers compile a promotion strategy to promote Burwell Hall.

H402 PUBLIC HALLS REPORT

The Committee received and considered the report of the Venue & Events Officer.

Members were pleased to hear of the news of the recruitment of a Venue & Events Co-ordinator who was due to commence the role in August.

The Committee heard from the Head of Estates & Operations who provided a verbal update to explain that proposal to review the long-standing seat sponsorship arrangements. Members provided their updated thoughts of how the scheme could be implemented and that it posed a low-risk financial outlay and would be self-advertising once plaques were in place. They welcomed the review report at the next meeting of the Committee.

Members were also pleased to hear that there had not been any negative reaction to the placement of the clothing bin in support of Thames Valley Air Ambulance, however recognised it was still at an early stage of use.

Resolved:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted.

H403 CORN EXCHANGE BUSINESS REPORT

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

Members were pleased to receive the summary of activity and to hear of the success of events held especially the premiere of Los Banditos of Ducklington Lake by a local young filmmaker.

They also heard of the success of the relaunched summer outdoor music events which had been bolstered by the fine weather in June and welcomed the launch of a quarterly Open Mic showcase event which they hoped would see the same level of engagement from residents.

Resolved:

That, the report and verbal update be noted.

H404 CHILDREN'S MEMORIAL GARDEN

The Committee received the report of the Project Officer confirming the completion of the Children's Memorial Garden project at Windrush Cemetery.

The Head of Estates & Operations summarised the report to highlight the tasks completed and the level of support provided by the Halls & Green Spaces Administration Support Assistant which had been pivotal in bringing a swift conclusion to the project.

Members thanked all those involved and were pleased to hear that the Friends of the Cemeteries group had also passed on their words of gratitude.

Resolved:

1. That, the report and verbal update to noted and,
2. That, all staff involved be thanked for their support in order to complete the project.

H405 NEWLAND ALLOTMENTS - REQUEST FOR SHEDS

The Committee received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk outlining a Witney Allotment Association request for the Council to pay for the installation of three sheds at the Newlands Allotment site.

Members were unanimous in agreement that the sheds should be replaced at a cost to the Council as the reason for their removal was in order for the Council to install additional fencing to future proof the security of the site.

The Committee thought the budget specified by the Allotment Association was prudent and therefore agreed a budget of £1,000 from the allotments earmarked reserve and that the purchase of the units required be delegated to Officers.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, three new replacement sheds be purchased for the Newland Allotment site utilising a £1,000 budget and,
3. That this be delegated to officer to finalise.

The meeting closed at: 6.50 pm

Chair