
Agenda Item: Witney Chamber of Commerce

Meeting Date: Monday, 15 September 2025

Contact Officer: Deputy Town Clerk

The purpose of this report is for Members to consider collaboration with Witney Chamber of Commerce through a Witney Town Centre Forum.

Background

At the meeting of the Committee on 14 July 2025, it was resolved that 'officers draft a framework of how the Council can work collaboratively with Witney Chamber of Commerce for presentation at a future meeting' (minute no. SC415 refers).

At the above meeting, it was unanimously agreed that the Council should re-establish a Town Centre Forum, which was previously run and administered by the Council between approximately 2008 and 2017. The Forum would serve as a platform to discuss matters relating to the town centre, aligning with the shared aims of the existing Witney Town Partnership.

Current Situation

The purpose of the Forum is to bring together representatives from the Chamber and other stakeholders with a common goal: to help create a vibrant town centre where people want to live, work, shop, and spend their leisure time.

While it has not been possible to progress this further over the summer due to limited Town Council resources, this item remains a key aim of the Committee and further discussion is required with the Chamber of Commerce.

The Town Centre Forum appears to be the most practical channel for establishing a collaborative framework with the Chamber, supporting the shared goal of a vibrant local economy; meeting the committee's terms of reference and helping to progress the findings of the Chamber's survey conducted earlier in the year including:

- Sharing of information and updates on town centre issues
- Support for joint initiatives and events
- Providing feedback on public realm, safety, and regeneration projects
- Acting as a consultative body for the Town Council and partners

The membership could be open to representatives from:

- Town, District, and County Councils
- Local businesses and business groups
- Police and public services
- Community and voluntary sector

The governance of the Forum meetings:

- Held quarterly or as needed
- Chaired by a Town Councillor or appointed representative
- Administrative support provided by the Town Council
- Non-decision-making but can make recommendations

Reporting:

- Notes shared with the Town Council and members
- Issues raised may inform Council policy or action

Impact Assessments

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) Equality – no direct impact although collaborative working may highlight good practice for all parties.
- b) Crime & Disorder – the Forum will provide a larger audience to discuss issues relating to crime and disorder in the town centre.
- c) Environment & Climate Emergency – the Council representatives will be able to engage with business owners and advise them on future schemes which will help achieve shared goals.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

- The town council is only able to conduct activities within its remit and legislation and only has limited resources.

Social Value

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates.

A vibrant local economy delivers social value by creating employment opportunities and supporting overall community wellbeing. It enhances access to services, fosters civic pride, and encourages social interaction through public spaces and local events. In turn, increased

footfall and spending help sustain local infrastructure and public services, contributing to a stronger, more cohesive, and prosperous community.

Financial implications

- There is no set budget for any projects associated with a Town Centre Forum.
- Officer time for administration and attendance of meetings and any actions arising.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and:

1. Consider approval of the Town Centre Forum along the above lines (and further discussion with the Chamber of Commerce).