

**MEETING OF THE
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

Held on Monday, 28 July 2025

At 7.00 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney

Present:

Councillor A Bailey (Chair)

Councillors:	J Doughty	R Crouch
	O Collins	G Doughty
	G Meadows	D Newcombe
	J Aitman	J Robertshaw
	T Ashby	S Simpson
	D Temple	J Treloar
	A Mubin	
Officers:	Sharon Groth	Town Clerk
	Adam Clapton	Deputy Town Clerk
	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
Others:	One member of the public.	

441 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Enright, R Smith & D Edwards-Hughes.

442 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest from Members or Officers.

443 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 23 June 2025 were received.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Council meeting held 23 June 2025 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

Cllr S Simpson joined the meeting at 6:03pm

444 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

445 **WITNEY COMMUNITY POLICING ISSUES**

Apologies had been received from Inspector C Ball who was unfortunately unable to attend or send a representative.

Members discussed Police related issues such as an increase in anti-social behaviour and littering at the Tiny Forest, homeless occupation in the churchyard of St Marys Church and disregard by some motorcycle users in the town in respect of loud or adapted exhaust systems for which they believed there were regulations to limit the noise output, and therefore a matter that TVP should deal with.

Officers advised that Members concerns would be passed onto the Witney neighbourhood police team.

A Member of the public joined the meeting at 6:05pm.

446 **AN UPDATE FROM WITNEY OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCILLORS AND WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCILLORS**

Oxfordshire Country Council

Cllr T Ashby provided an update on the Oxford daily congestion charge, proposals to reduce household waste centre opening days & times, and Witney High Street redevelopment which had been delayed until 2026. He advised ANPR cameras would be installed before the end of 2025.

West Oxfordshire District Council

Cllr R Crouch advised that a successful event to promote mental health wellbeing had been held with thirteen local providers participating; she explained that the providers number one need was for suitable space in Witney and that if Members were aware of any suitable space that these groups could use to speak with her.

Cllr Crouch also updated Members of the progress of the Council of Sanctuary programme and that it was hoped that the related training scheme could be rolled out to parishes to support those Officers and Councillors.

Cllr J Aitman highlighted the Wellness & Awareness event on 17 August being held in the Langdale Hall by Tough to Talk. A mental health support organisation,

Resolved:

That, the updates be noted.

447 **REPORT BACK FROM THE COUNCILLORS ON THE WORK WITH EXTERNAL BODIES WHERE THEY SERVE AS THE TOWN COUNCIL'S NOMINATED REPRESENTATIVE**

Cllr R Crouch provided an update from the Witney Town Charity and advised there were no issues with the alms houses after recent inspections and briefly touched on the rough sleeper raised above which was in the vicinity, of which Cllr J Doughty endorsed.

Cllr R Crouch updated Members that the Witney Education Foundation would be carefully considering any future grant requests due to limited funding being available.

Cllr J Aitman encouraged any Members with casework that involved residents of the Cogges area to who were in need of financial assistance to get in contact with her directly as a Cogges Welfare Trust representative.

Resolved:

That, the updated be noted.

448 **PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE - 24 JUNE & 15 JULY 2025**

The Chair of the Committee presented the above minutes to Council and moved their acceptance.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Planning & Development Committee meetings held on 24 June & 15 July 2025 be received and any recommendations therein approved.

449 **PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE - 30 JUNE 2025**

The Chair presented the above minutes to Council and moved their acceptance.

PR393 – Cllr T Ashby advised that the location of the MUGA at Ralegh Crescent had been assigned and would be as detailed in the report that was presented to the Committee on 30 June.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee meeting held on 30 June 2025 be received and any recommendations therein approved.

450 **HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE - 7 JULY 2025**

The Chair of the Committee presented the above minutes to Council and moved their acceptance.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee meeting held on 7 July 2025 be received and any recommendations therein approved.

451 **STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE - 14 JULY 2025**

The Chair of the Committee presented the above minutes to Council and moved their acceptance.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the Stronger Communities Committee meeting held on 14 July 2025 be received and any recommendations therein approved.

452 **POLICY, GOVERNANCE & FINANCE COMMITTEE - 21 JULY 2025 (AND 23 JUNE 2025)**

The Vice Chair of the Committee presented the above minutes to Council and moved their acceptance.

F426 – Cllr T Ashby asked that it be noted that he was not in agreement with the amendment relating to “groups and forums”.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee meetings held on 23 June and 21 July 2025 be received and any recommendations therein approved.

453 **CLIMATE ACTION WORKING PARTY - 22 JULY 2025**

The Chair of the Working Party presented the above minutes to Council and moved their acceptance.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Climate Action Working Party meeting held on 22 July 2025 be received and any recommendations therein approved.

454 **CIVIC ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Council received the report of the Mayor and Mayor’s Secretary which highlighted the civic engagements of the Mayor and Deputy since the last meeting.

Resolved:

That, the report be noted.

455 **HEALTH & SAFETY**

The Council received the report of the Compliance and Environment Officer regarding Health & Safety matters.

The Town Clerk/CEO also provided a verbal update on work required to make repairs to the timber climbing towners installed approximately 10 years ago at The Leys and Burwell play areas. The repairs had been identified by ROSPA as being a possible hazard requiring a specialist inspection to determine the level of safety. Further inspections had been completed by HUCK’s, the supplier and installer of the equipment who had advised that the towers must be kept closed and that the estimated repairs would be £6,000 for The Leys and £11,500 for Burwell with a lead time of six weeks. These repairs would provide an additional 5 years’ worth of play.

The Town Clerk had instructed the work using the delegated powers and payment would be made from the Play Equipment Earmarked reserve which stood at £75,000.

A Member expressed their disappointment that the examinations by RoSPA had not been carried out at a time that would then allow for any defects to be fixed without an impact on school holiday periods when the equipment would be in high demand.

Resolved:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, the work to repair the wooden climbing towers are authorised and,
3. That, Officers arrange for the annual inspection to be undertaken over the winter period.

456 **VANDALISM & ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR**

The Council received a list of Vandalism and anti-social behaviour incidents since the last meeting.

Members were disappointed to hear of the additional costs to repair the COVID memorial at the Leys following it being vandalised and questioned if the position of the memorial should be reconsidered. Cllr O Collins provided a summary of the reasoning behind its positioning, and it was agreed that the situation of further risk of vandalism be monitored. Additionally, it was agreed that the Stronger Communities Committee be asked to review how the memorial can be promoted to highlight its significance.

The Committee Clerk provided a verbal update on a report of vandalism that had been reported earlier that day in relation to the anti-social activity at the Tiny Forest. The police had been asked to increase its patrols.

Several Councillors raised the subject of abandoned bikes and other equipment in the town centre which they felt brought a negative impression and may constitute fly tipping.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the Stronger Communities consider the promotion of the COVID memorial and,
3. That, officers report any long-term abandoned bikes to the Windrush Bike Project to see if they can utilise parts.

457 **COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS & REPRESENTATION ON OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS**

The Council received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk relating to changes to Committee positions and a nominated elected trustee to represent the Council.

Members were unanimous in their agreement of Cllr D Temple being appointed as a replacement on the Park & Recreation Committee and also as the replacement Council liaison to Witney Flood Group replacing Cllr T Ashby & Cllr J Robertshaw respectively.

Also, it was agreed unanimously that Cllr G Meadows represent the Council on the Henry Box Book Collection Trust following the request from Mrs E Duncan to resign her position.

Resolved:

1. That, Cllr D Temple replace Cllr T Ashby on the Parks & Recreation Committee and,
2. That, Cllr D Temple replace Cllr J Robertshaw as Liaison to Witney Flood Group and,
3. That, Cllr G Meadows replace the retiring Mrs E Duncan on the Henry Box Book Collection Trust.

458 **WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN**

The Council received the draft of the Corporate Strategic Plan as had been presented to the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee on 21 July. The Town Clerk/CEO advised that work would continue on the plan over the summer period and asked that Members provide any feedback once they had reviewed fully the document.

The Plan had been included so as to assist Members in their decision on the submission of a response to West Oxfordshire District Councils Local Plan 2041 consultation.

A Member raised whether it was necessary to include details of the political control of the Council prior to 2019.

Resolved:

That, the draft plan be noted.

During the following Agenda Item - Cllr J Treloar left the meeting at 7:50pm and re-joined at 7:57pm.

459 **WITNEY OXFORD TRANSPORT GROUP**

The Council received the notification of the Witney Oxford Transport Group's response to the West Oxfordshire District Council Local Plan Consultation.

The Chair also updated the Council on the recent West Oxfordshire District Council scoping document that had been compiled to provide details on the costs, economic benefits and changes to transport use. This indicated a £50m uplift to Witney's economy and a reduction of 600,000 car journeys through the town.

Concerns were raised that should a railway be introduced that it would have a negative effect on the surrounding green spaces however the Council was supportive of public transport plans that would alleviate the issues of the A40 traffic which in their view were unsustainable.

The Council also showed concern for the funding of a railway given the lack of infrastructure which was already affecting the growth of Witney both business and residential. It considered that the town be eligible for funding from the Oxford to Cambridge funding.

Resolved:

That, the update be noted.

460 **WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN 2041**

The Council received the town council response to the Local Plan 2041 consultation which had been drafted by the Planning and Development Committee.

Members were satisfied it incorporated the principles of the town council's strategic plan and highlighted concerns raised by the Council and its Committees. In response to the above item, it was agreed a further comment should be added regarding alternative transport options to the oversubscribed A40.

Resolved:

1. That, the response to the Local Plan 2041 consultation be approved with the following addition,
2. That, the Local Plan should address the need for sustainable transport and infrastructure solutions in and around Witney, where current limitations were constraining growth and a lack of investment. In particular, options to alleviate pressure on the A40 should be explored and carefully balanced with the need to protect green spaces and local natural environments.

461 **FUTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN OXFORDSHIRE**

The Town Clerk/CEO provided a verbal update regarding the progress of her contact with Oxfordshire County Council, Oxford City Council and West Oxfordshire District Council on their proposals on Local Government reorganisation in 2027.

The Town Clerk had also attended an Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils event the previous week and provided details of the discussions had. Additionally, she provided clarification on the approach that dual and triple hatted councillors should take when considering the devolution proposals due to their pecuniary interests. This had been provided by OALC in the form of an email which was distributed to all Members.

Resolved:

1. That, the verbal update be noted and,
2. That, Councillors note the guidance of OALC in relation to Dual and Triple hatted Members.

462 **A40 BARNARD GATE JUNCTIONS - EXPERIMENTAL TRO**

The Council received the correspondence from Oxfordshire County Council in relation to a proposed Experimental Traffic Order.

Members believed that the order did not go far enough as it did not consider the issues faced by vehicle use of the opposite South Leight junction and would only push any potential accident location to further along the road towards Eynsham.

It was agreed to delegate the response to the Planning & Development Committee to consider further at their meeting of 5 August 2025.

Resolved:

1. That, the correspondence be noted and,
2. That, the response be delegated to the Planning & Development Committee.

463 **COMMUNICATION FROM THE LEADER**

In the absence of the Leader, the Deputy Leader advised there was no official communication but wished Members a good summer and encouraged them to enjoy the sabbatical from Committee Meetings, however she noted Councillors casework historically increased over the same period.

Resolved:

That, the update be noted.

464 **PART-NIGHT LIGHTING CONSULTATION - OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

Members were disappointed to receive the correspondence as they had already made the Council's position clear on the proposals for part night lighting.

It was also noted that the poll issued was very basic and did nothing to gather anything other than a yes, no, or maybe response.

Resolved:

That, the correspondence be noted.

465 **POLICE & CRIME COMMISSIONER - NEWSLETTERS**

The Council received the most recent Thames Valley Police & Crime Commissioner newsletters.

Resolved:

That, the PCC newsletters be noted.

466 **QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

In the absence of the Leader the Deputy Leader took questions from Members.

Cllr J Doughty asked that consideration be given to re-siting the Mayoral board currently displayed in the Chamber Room of the Town Hall. As the Chamber was no longer in use it should be considered so as the public can view it. In response the Deputy Town Clerk confirmed that this was something already under consideration.

The Mayor asked that the Deputy Leader join him in expressing congratulations to the England Women's football team on their victory in the Euro 2025 competition which was duly and enthusiastically provided.

467 **SEALING OF DOCUMENTS**

There were no items sealed since the last meeting.

Resolved:

That, the seal of the Council be affixed to any documents arising from decisions taken by this meeting of the Council.

The meeting closed at: 8.20 pm

Chair