
Agenda Item:	Thermal Imaging Camera
Meeting Date:	Monday, 24 November 2025
Contact Officer:	Compliance and Environment Officer

The purpose of this report is to update Members on the thermal imaging camera (TIC) and its use by the local community.

Background

At the Climate, Biodiversity & Planning (CBP) Committee meeting held on 30 January 2024, a report was presented by the Operations Manager regarding the Council's Thermal Imaging Camera (TIC) hire scheme. Following discussion, the Committee recommended that officers develop and promote the scheme as a free-to-access community resource. Additionally, Members of the CBP Committee volunteered to carry out assessments using the camera to help raise awareness and encourage uptake.

Members expressed strong support for ensuring the camera is actively used and that the scheme remains free of charge to residents. The intention is to empower households to identify areas of heat loss and improve insulation, thereby contributing to energy efficiency and carbon reduction.

If widely adopted, the scheme has the potential to generate significant environmental benefits. The cumulative impact of individual home improvements could lead to a measurable reduction in carbon emissions across Witney, supporting the Council's Climate Emergency commitments.

Current Situation

The TIC was promoted to the community at the 2025 Witney Carnival and the Eco Fair on 9 October 2025.

Officers have produced a draft Thermal Imaging Camera Use Policy for Public Use and a User Agreement Form. The draft policy is attached for Members consideration. The use of the TIC will be promoted to residents and business who fall within the geographical confines of Witney Town Parish Boundary. Business use will not permit use for commercial purposes without prior approval. Proof of eligibility will be required at the time of collection of the TIC.

The TIC will be supplied with a simple user's guide, how to understand the images and what to do next with the results.

At the Eco Fair, interest in using the TIC was also expressed from residents from adjoining small parishes. This may be an opportunity to assist neighbouring small Parish Councils and their residents in offering the hire of the TIC. Consideration is requested by Members on whether this could be accommodated either at a nominal cost e.g. £25.00 or free use, but with the proviso that Witney residents have priority over hiring of the TIC.

The TIC will be promoted on the Council's website and at suitable events that the Council attends and through partnership working with other organisations.

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 - The scheme is accessible to all residents, ensuring equitable opportunity to benefit from energy efficiency insights regardless of income, housing type, or background. It supports inclusive engagement by removing financial barriers to participation.
- b) Biodiversity - While the scheme itself does not directly impact biodiversity, its contribution to reducing energy consumption and carbon emissions supports broader environmental goals that benefit local ecosystems and biodiversity in the long term.
- c) Crime & Disorder - There are no direct implications for crime and disorder. However, increased community engagement and awareness through council-led initiatives can contribute to a stronger sense of civic responsibility and cohesion.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency - In alignment with the Council's Climate Emergency declaration, the free hire of the thermal imaging camera encourages residents to identify and address energy inefficiencies in their homes. This supports local carbon reduction efforts, promotes sustainable living, and contributes to the Council's environmental objectives.

Risk

While the scheme offers clear social and environmental benefits, there are several risks associated with hiring out the TIC:

The TIC may be lost, stolen, or damaged while in the hirer's possession. Although the User Agreement outlines financial responsibility, recovery of costs may be challenging in some cases.

Incorrect use of the equipment could result in inaccurate readings, reducing the effectiveness of the scheme and potentially leading to misinformation. A basic operation and user guide will be provided to each hirer.

High demand may lead to scheduling conflicts or delays, potentially causing frustration among users and reducing the perceived value of the initiative.

Data Privacy Concerns - If users capture images of neighbouring properties or individuals, there may be privacy implications. Clear guidance will be provided to ensure responsible use. Officers will check the TIC is clear of all images on its return and prior to hiring.

Although administration is planned within existing resources, unexpected issues (e.g. disputes, technical support, or repairs) could place additional strain on officer time.

There may be legal or insurance implications if the equipment causes injury or damage, or if disputes arise over responsibility for loss or misuse.

Social Value

The provision of free access to a TIC delivers meaningful social value by supporting residents in identifying energy inefficiencies within their homes. This initiative contributes to several key outcomes:

Reduction in Energy Costs - By enabling households to detect areas of heat loss, residents can take informed steps to improve insulation and reduce energy consumption, leading to lower utility bills, particularly beneficial for those at risk of fuel poverty.

Environmental Benefits - Encouraging energy-saving behaviours supports local and national carbon reduction targets, contributing to broader climate action and sustainability objectives.

Improved Health and Wellbeing - Warmer, more energy-efficient homes can positively impact physical and mental health, especially for vulnerable groups such as older adults, young children, and individuals with long-term health conditions.

Community Empowerment and Education - The scheme promotes awareness of energy efficiency and empowers residents to make proactive changes. It fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility for environmental stewardship within the community.

Enhanced Community Engagement - By participating in the scheme, residents become more involved in local initiatives, strengthening community ties and encouraging collaboration on shared environmental goals.

This initiative aligns with the Council's commitment to sustainability, social equity, and community wellbeing, offering a practical and accessible tool to support residents in making their homes more energy efficient.

Financial Implications

The administration of the scheme will be accommodated within existing resources, with no additional staffing or budgetary requirements anticipated.

The Thermal Imaging Camera User Agreement stipulates that hirers are financially liable for the repair or replacement of the equipment in the event of loss, damage, or theft occurring during the hire period, where such incidents arise from negligence or misuse.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and consider the following:

1. Adopt the draft Thermal Imaging Camera Use Policy for Public Use.
2. That the Council assists neighbouring smaller Parish Councils and their residents in offering the hire of the TIC. This could be accommodated either at a nominal cost e.g. £25.00 (or as recommended by Members at this meeting) or free use, with the proviso that Witney residents have priority over hiring of the TIC.