

Stronger Communities



Committee Objectives & Work Programme for the Municipal Year (2025-26)

Several projects remain in progress and will continue into the new municipal year, including ongoing infrastructure improvements and community partnerships. The Committee must now consider its priorities for 2025/26, balancing ambitious new initiatives with the completion of existing commitments, and ensuring alignment with any revised terms of reference.

Budget allocations from previous years remain available through Earmarked Reserves for specific infrastructure projects, providing flexibility in programme delivery while ensuring financial sustainability. Note that responsibility for trees, floral displays and hanging baskets, will transfer to the new Climate & Biodiversity Committee, subject to full Council approval on 23rd June 2025.

Proposed Priorities for 2025/26

Core Service Provision

- Continue core grant funding for community transport (£23,500) and youth services (£40,000) as essential community services, in addition to funding The Station – detached youth work
- Develop enhanced youth engagement initiatives including potential expansion of Witney Youth Council activities

Infrastructure and Public Realm Enhancement

- Prioritise the infrastructure replacement programme using available Earmarked Reserves, focusing on safety-critical items and those with greatest community benefit
- Monitor and support the High Street upgrades project, continuing to work closely with Oxfordshire County Council to ensure that new public space enhancements align with the Council's standards for infrastructure and planting schemes
- Consider allocating resources to upgrade key elements such as the town centre bus shelters outside Barclays Bank and the Town Hall, which are essential for creating a more visually attractive and welcoming town centre environment
- Address bin provision and placement issues in the town centre, working with West Oxfordshire District Council to resolve concerns about removed bins near Mountain Warehouse and Part'n'Parcel that have negatively impacted the town's appearance

Wayfinding and Visitor Experience

- Oversee the West Oxfordshire District Council's wayfinding signage project, recognising that the Council will likely assume responsibility for maintaining this infrastructure once installed
- Possible partnership working with the Chamber of Commerce to support initiatives to:
 - improve the Welcome to Witney web pages and information resources to better guide visitors
 - Explore opportunities to enhance data collection on visitor insights to understand what draws people to Witney and inform future strategy development
 - Consider coach parking and drop-off solutions as part of broader visitor accessibility improvements

Community Engagement and Communications

- Establish enhanced community engagement frameworks to ensure resident input into project selection and delivery, potentially including annual satisfaction surveys
- Explore opportunities for collaborative projects with local businesses and the Chamber of Commerce to strengthen the town's economic vitality
- Continue to utilise the Town Council's communication channels, including newsletters, to gather community feedback through initiatives such as QR code surveys

Strategic Planning and Partnership Working

- Begin strategic planning for the implications of local government reorganisation, particularly assessing what additional assets the Town Council may need to take on for future maintenance and management
- Strengthen partnership working between different tiers of local government to maximise the benefits of funding opportunities such as Section 106 contributions
- Support local businesses by advocating for continued cash payment acceptance where appropriate

Inclusivity and Environmental Sustainability

- Embed inclusivity and environmental sustainability as key criteria for all project approvals, supporting the Council's equality duties and Climate Emergency commitments
- Ensure all infrastructure improvements incorporate environmental considerations and support biodiversity where possible.

Agreed: Stronger Communities, 2nd June 2025 (Minute no. SC305)