

**CLIMATE & BIODIVERSITY COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

Held on Tuesday, 9 September 2025

At 6.00 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney

Present:

Councillor S Simpson (Chair)

Councillors:	D Enright	R Smith
	A Mubin	J Treloar
	D Newcombe	J Doughty (In place of J Robertshaw)
Officers:	Adam Clapton	Deputy Town Clerk
	Sharon Groth	Town Clerk
	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
	Carl Whitehead	Biodiversity & Green Spaces Officer
	Janine Sparrowhawk	Compliance & Environment Officer
Others:	One member of the public.	

CB501 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor J Robertshaw, Councillor J Doughty attended as a substitute.

Councillor A Bailey submitted his apologies after the meeting had commenced, and as such, they could not be formally communicated during the meeting.

CB502 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members or officers.

CB503 MINUTES

The minutes of the Climate & Biodiversity Committee meeting held on 20 May 2025 were received.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Climate & Biodiversity Committee meeting held on 20 May 2025 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

CB504 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Committee adjourned for this item.

The committee received representations from a resident of Kingfisher Meadows concerning Agenda Item 8

The Committee reconvened.

CB505 ROAD VERGE NATURE RESERVES AND CIRCULAR WALKING ROUTE FOR WITNEY

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 had heard how pleased the member of the public was with the current state of the verges in the Burford Road area and how they hoped these could be further maintained as road verge nature reserves.

Members were supportive of any activity that would assist the protection of the species identified in the residents brief to the Committee and welcomed the potential inclusion in the town biodiversity portfolio. It was noted that some of the verges highlighted were in a neighbouring parish however the Biodiversity & Green Spaces Officers (B&GSO) explained the ownership structure of the verges and offered to make contact with Oxfordshire Country Council (OCC) to discuss changes or possible adoption into the Road verge nature reserves scheme.

Discussion turned to that of walking routes within the town. The residents expressed their keenness to be involved in developing a group of three walking routes with resilient signage options. A Member who was also a West Oxfordshire District Council suggested that collaboration with WODC could lead to cost savings as work was already under consideration.

Members were unanimously supportive of these ideas and asked that they be delegated to Officers to explore the options further.

Recommended:

1. That, the report and verbal updates be noted and,
2. That, the B&GSO make contact with OCC to discuss the action to adopt the areas identified as a road verge nature reserve and,
3. That, Officers explore the options of walking routes in and around the town with a potential collaboration with WODC.

The Member of the Public left the meeting at 6:36pm.

CB506 FINANCE REPORT

The Committee received and considered the report of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) detailing income and expenditure for budgets which were the responsibility of the committee.

No questions arose from Members.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the management accounts of the Climate & Biodiversity Committee for the period 1 April to 30 June be approved.
- 3.

CB507 **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 acknowledged that a huge portion of the work carried out by the Councils Team was long term however, they were encouraged to hear and see the improvements that are being made predominantly at the Lake & Country Park. These improvements included the changes to the level of the pathway around the lake that had led to improved access in time of flooding.

In response to comments raised in the survey regarding the appearance of the street scene, it was raised by a Member that the current scheme being run by West Oxfordshire District Council to improve commercial shop fronts also extended to planting idea and this could be something for the town businesses to explore.

Resolved:

That, the report be noted.

CB508 **CLIMATE ACTION WORKING PARTY MINUTES**

Members received and considered the minutes of the Climate Action Working Party held on 22 July 2025.

Item 5 - Members were provided with an update on the progress of the Eco Fair which would take place on 9 October 2025. It was further explained that the event would primarily be an opportunity for partner organisations to promote their schemes to residents.

It was then proposed that a further event be held in the future on a weekend day to capture those residents that would not be able to attend a weekday event.

The next Climate Action Working Party meeting would be held on 25 September 2025 at 4pm, thus providing sufficient time for budget requirements to be presented to the meeting of the Council on 6th October.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Climate Action Working Party be approved and the recommendations therein be approved.

CB509 **BIODIVERSITY UPDATE**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Biodiversity & Green Spaces Officer which provided an update on the recent surveys carried out in the Country park and the aims for its future development.

Members were also supportive of the plans to carry out the work to plant wildflowers on the Curbridge Roundabout, though this would involve the use of heavy machinery and additional working hours they were pleased to hear that no road closure or restrictions would be required.

Additionally, the Committee were pleased to hear of the continued collaboration with the Witney Shed to provide habitat boxes.

Recommended:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, a wildflower area be established at the Curbridge Roundabout.

CB510 LAKE & COUNTRY PARK REPORT

The Committee received and considered the report of the Biodiversity & Green Spaces Officer along with a verbal update to explain how the Council may approach a reapplication for Green Flag status.

Members heard that Officers had recognised that the application required additional documentation to be completed prior to the submission and that the application should be submitted at a time that would see the onsite visit being carried out in March or April when the biodiversity would be at its best.

In response to Member's questions, the B&GSO confirmed that the Green Flag was an excellent status to hold as it could lead to more support, by way of grant funding, in order to reach the Councils leisure ambitions.

The Committee was unanimous in favour of supporting the reapplication providing that it did not create unnecessary time pressures on Officers.

Members also received details of the updated Management Plan for the Lake & Country Park as well as the In Bloom submission documentation. No questions arose and the Committee thanked the Council team for their work in providing the updates.

Recommended:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, Officers resubmit an application for Green Flag status and,
3. That, the updated management plan be approved.

CB511 CARBON FOOTPRINT REPORT - WITNEY CIVIL PARISH

The Committee received and considered the report of the Compliance and Environment Officer which outlined details of the Carbon Footprint Audit for the Parish.

Members heard how the report would be used to continually track the changes made and hopefully track any improvements made. They also heard that the parish currently compared well against other similar sized towns both locally and across Great Britain.

The C&EO outlined the changes targets and suggested that these be discussed at greater length at the Climate Action Working Party meetings.

Members were encouraged to fully evaluate the contents of the report in order to prepare for future discussions.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, Officers undertake an analysis of the Parish Carbon footprint and prepare a schedule of actions and recommendations for consideration.

*Cllr A Mubin left the meeting at 7:18pm.
Rejoining part way through the following item at 7:25pm.*

CB512 CLIMATE CHANGE STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN

The Committee received and considered the report of the Compliance & Environment Officer relating to the first draft of the Climate Change strategy and action plan.

Members again received a comprehensive document that they were encouraged to review fully so that they may feedback at the meeting of the Climate Working Action party to be held on 25 September 2025. They heard that it tied in with the larger overall Council Strategic Plan. Officers would be working collaboratively to ensure there would be a clear understanding across the Council in order that progress was smooth and effective.

The C&EO updated the Committee on the progress of the Carbon Audit of the Councils buildings; there had been a delay due to the reports being produced with the assistance of university students which given the time of year had been on their summer recess.

The initial focus would be on Burwell Hall as this was owned by the Council outright and did not have any listed status therefore any actions could be actioned without undue delay. Any recommendations would be communicated to the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee for their budget approval.

Members also heard of the introduction of Key Performance Indicators to the Action Plan in order that the Committee along with the Climate Action Working Party could have input in setting expected delivery targets on each of the aims.

The Committee congratulated and thanked the C&EO on the process made in the short time that she had been in post and warmly welcomed seeing how the plans progressed.

Recommended:

1. That, the report and verbal update be noted and,
2. That, that the first draft of the Action plan be noted and,
3. That, Members provide feedback on the plan and KPI's to the meeting of the CAWP on 25 September.

The Biodiversity & Green Spaces Officer left the meeting at 7:30pm

CB513 **WEST WITNEY PROJECTS - ENERGY EFFICIENCY MEASURES**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Compliance & Environment Officer which provides details of the energy efficient elements of the West Witney Projects which would commence later in the year.

Members heard that the report had been complied with information gathered from the Project Officer in response to a request from the Climate Action Working Party at their meeting of 22 July 2025.

Members raised questions regarding to the use of solar energy and if this would be used year-round. They also asked why a heat exchanger had been scoped out of the proposals. It was agreed that these questions be passed to the Project Officer for response.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the questions raised be passed to the Project Officer for response to the Committee.

CB514 **POWER FOR PEOPLE - COMMUNITY ENERGY**

The Committee received the correspondence from the Power for the People campaign.

Members acknowledged that this formed part of the Terms of Reference for the Committee to support "To explore and promote the expansion of community energy" and therefore welcomed being kept updated as the scheme progresses.

Members heard that West Oxfordshire District Council was also currently looking at this and similar schemes.

Resolved:

That, the correspondence be noted.

The meeting closed at: 7.45 pm

Chair