
Agenda Item: Update on Reformation of the Witney Town Centre Forum

Meeting Date: Monday 26 January 2026

Contact Officer: Town Clerk/CEO

The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update for awareness and information on progress made towards the reformation of the Witney Town Centre Forum.

Background

The Stronger Communities Committee has unanimously agreed that the Witney Town Centre Forum should be re-established and administered by Witney Town Council, as a successor to earlier partnership arrangements. This decision followed consideration of the Witney Chamber of Commerce survey and the Committee's desire to strengthen collaborative working in support of a vibrant town centre.

The Council subsequently approved the establishment of the Forum and appointed three Councillors to represent the Town Council, these being Cllrs Andy Bailey, Georgia Meadows and David Edward-Hughes.

The Forum is intended to bring together key stakeholders, including local businesses, partner authorities, and community representatives, to share information, discuss town centre issues, and support coordinated initiatives

Current Situation

The Town Clerk / CEO is the lead officer on the Witney Town Centre Forum, supported by the Council's Administration Team.

Initial preparatory work has been undertaken, including the identification of relevant stakeholders and the issue of invitations to participate in the Forum. This work demonstrates the Council's ongoing commitment to progressing the Forum in line with previous resolutions of the Committee and Council.

However, Members are asked to note that, since the end of November 2025, the Administration Team has been operating with over 50% reduced staffing capacity due to vacancy and ongoing sickness. As a result, while invitations have been issued, it has not yet been possible to arrange and service the inaugural meeting of the Forum. This reflects current resourcing constraints rather than a change in priority or intent.

The reformation of the Witney Town Centre Forum remains an agreed objective, and progress will continue as officer and administrative capacity allows. Once adequate administrative

support is in place, the inaugural meeting will be convened and Members updated accordingly.

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.

Equality

The Forum is intended to promote inclusive engagement with a wide range of town centre stakeholders. No adverse equality impacts are anticipated.

Biodiversity

No direct biodiversity impacts arise from this update. Future Forum discussions may positively influence environmentally sensitive initiatives.

Crime & Disorder

No direct impact at this stage. The Forum may, in due course, provide a useful platform for discussion of town centre safety and related issues.

Environment & Climate Emergency

No direct impact arising from this report. The Forum may support longer-term initiatives aligned with the Council's climate objectives.

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.

There are no immediate risks arising from this update. Clear communication with Members and stakeholders helps manage expectations regarding timescales while administrative capacity is constrained.

Social Value

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

The reformation of the Witney Town Centre Forum has the potential to deliver positive social value by strengthening collaboration, supporting the local economy, and enhancing community wellbeing.

Financial implications

There are no direct financial implications arising from this update. Officer time will continue to be required to support the Forum within existing resources.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and the current position regarding progress on the reformation of the Witney Town Centre Forum, including the impact of temporary administrative capacity constraints.