



WITNEY
TOWN COUNCIL

ANNUAL REPORT

2025-2026



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This report provides an overview of the Council's services, activities, and achievements over the past year. It highlights the wide range of work undertaken on behalf of our residents and demonstrates the important role the Town Council plays in supporting community life in Witney. Further information about our meetings, facilities, and events can be found on our website at www.witney-tc.gov.uk.

As Head of Paid Service, I am pleased to reflect on another busy and productive year for the Council. Our staff continue to deliver a broad range of services and initiatives that contribute to the wellbeing, vibrancy, and sustainability of the town. From maintaining our parks and green spaces and enhancing important natural areas, to supporting community events and managing key local facilities and venues, the Council remains committed to providing high-quality services for residents.

Our team of officers works closely with dedicated Town Councillors, local organisations, businesses, and community groups to ensure that the Council's work reflects the needs and aspirations of the town. This collaborative approach remains central to how we operate and enables us to deliver positive outcomes for the community. We also continue to strengthen our engagement with residents through consultation, communication, and partnership working to ensure community voices help shape the Council's priorities.

Local councils play an important role in shaping the places where people live, work, and spend their leisure time and continue to operate within a changing and often challenging environment. Despite these pressures, Witney Town Council remains focused on delivering value for residents while planning for the future of our town. With the adoption of the Council's Corporate Strategic Plan for 2025–2029, we have set clear priorities for the coming years and will continue to ensure our services, facilities, and community initiatives evolve to meet the needs of a growing and dynamic community.

The Council remains dedicated to protecting and enhancing Witney's environment, investing in our parks, facilities, and community spaces, supporting local organisations and residents, and ensuring that Witney continues to thrive as a vibrant and welcoming town.

I would like to thank our staff, councillors, volunteers, and partners for their continued commitment and contribution throughout the year. I hope you find this report informative and that it provides a useful insight into the work of your Town Council.

Sharon Groth
Witney Town Clerk/CEO





MAYOR OF WITNEY CLLR ANDY BAILEY

Serving as Mayor of Witney over the past year has been a genuine privilege. It has given me the opportunity to see first-hand just how many people across our town dedicate their time, energy and creativity to making Witney such a special place to live. While this report focuses on the work of Witney Town Council, it is also a chance to recognise the countless residents, volunteers, businesses and community organisations whose efforts strengthen the fabric of our town every day.

Over the past year, Witney has continued to demonstrate the strong sense of community that defines it. From well-attended town events and markets, to the work of local charities and voluntary groups supporting those in need, there is a clear commitment across our town to looking after one another and celebrating the place we call home. I have had the pleasure of meeting many of these groups during mayoral visits and events, and their passion for Witney is truly inspiring. These experiences have shown me how important it is that we continue to work collaboratively, creatively and positively to ensure that Witney Town Council serves, represents and celebrates the whole community.

This report highlights the projects, services and initiatives undertaken by the Town Council during the past year. These range from supporting community events and improving local facilities, to working with partners to ensure Witney continues to grow in a way that benefits residents while preserving the character of our town. Everything we do is rooted in the belief that Witney Town Council works best in partnership with the people it serves.

Over the past year the Council has continued to focus on practical improvements and supporting the activities that bring the town together. Delivering this work requires a great deal of coordination behind the scenes. I would like to thank my fellow councillors for the time and thought they give to representing residents across the town, often balancing these responsibilities alongside their professional and personal commitments. I am also deeply grateful to the Council's staff and officers whose dedication, organisation and professionalism ensure that projects move forward and services continue to run smoothly. Their efforts, often unseen, make an enormous difference to the day-to-day life of our town.

LEADER OF THE COUNCIL CLLR RUTH SMITH

Witney has 17 Town Councillors, and the more I work with them and partner organisations, the more I value their collective input. Together we speak up for Witney's needs while thinking ambitiously about our town's future. Though we don't always agree, we learn from one another and work constructively, guided by residents' experiences of living in Witney.

Witney Town Council is a capable council with committed, professional staff and the capacity to deliver services that go beyond the minimum required of us, such as our flood alleviation work in residential areas particularly prone to flooding. These strengths place us in a strong position as we approach local government Reorganisation.

The Council has a good reputation among neighbouring councils and works productively with our District and County Councils on projects affecting Witney. Other towns and parishes often look to our work when we move into new areas, and we are increasingly recognised as a modern, resilient and well-organised council.

Supporting young people in Witney remains a priority. Detached youth work delivered through The Station continues to provide valuable support, and our Youth Council is building relationships locally, nationally and even internationally with their counterparts in our twin town, Le Touquet.

Our civic events continue to bring the community together. Remembrance services and last year's 100th anniversary commemorations of VE Day and D-Day drew large crowds, while our Citizen of the Year awards and volunteer programme also recognise the remarkable contribution made by volunteers across the town and give us the opportunity to thank them.

Most of our civic and community events, such as the May Day and Advent Fayre, are free, as are our popular amenities, the Splash Park, Lake and Country Park and our play areas. This ensures families have places to gather, explore and enjoy themselves at no cost, making them accessible to all.

You can now watch our live-streamed committee meetings, and I encourage residents to stay informed by watching online or attending in person. You can also contact your councillors by email or speak with us at Councillors at the Café. Your views help shape our work as we continue striving to make Witney a town that thrives for everyone.



WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN AND PRIORITIES

In January 2026, Witney Town Council adopted its Corporate Strategic Plan for 2025–2029, setting out a clear vision and framework to guide the Council's work over the coming years.

The Plan brings together the Council's ambitions for Witney into a single corporate framework, ensuring that decisions, resources and services are aligned with the needs of residents and the future development of the town. It provides the Council's strategic direction through to 2029, supporting strong governance, community wellbeing, environmental responsibility and sustainable growth.

The Strategic Plan aligns with and provides direction for the Council's existing strategies, including the Open Spaces Strategy, Lake & Country Park Management Plan, Communications Strategy, Community Engagement Strategy, Investment Strategy, and its Medium-Term Financial Strategy alongside service business plans.

Delivery of the Plan is supported through the Council's committee structure, strong financial governance, and partnership working with public, private and voluntary sector organisations.

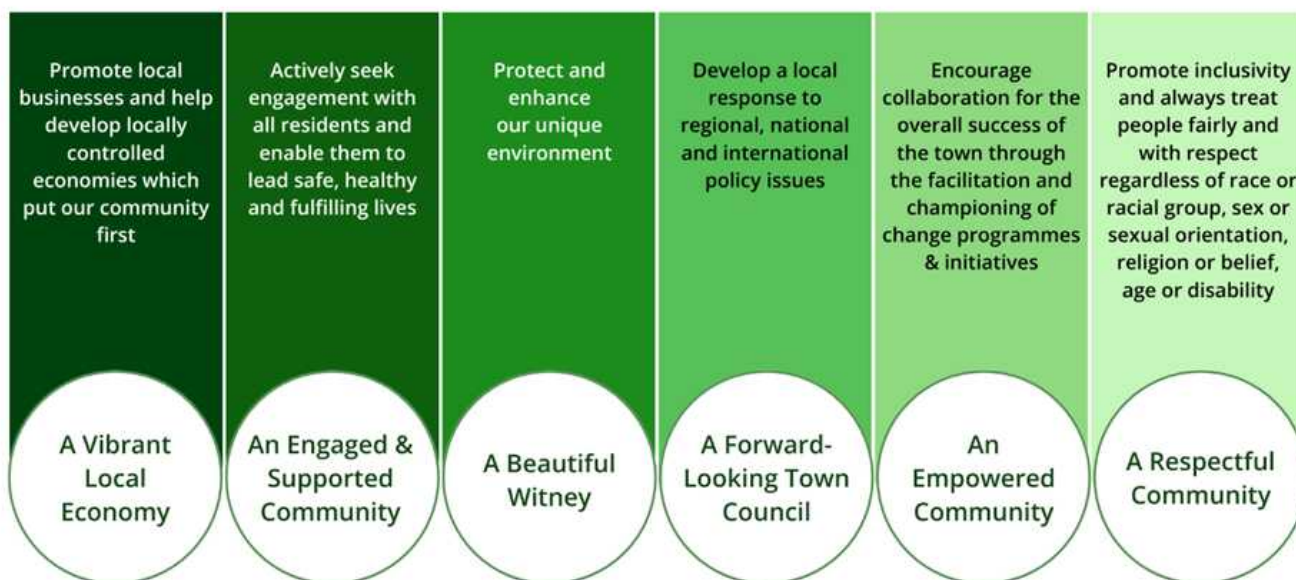
The Plan will be reviewed annually and refreshed following the May 2027 Town Council elections to ensure it remains relevant and responsive to community needs, as well as taking into account the outcome of the Local Government Reorganisation and ultimate plans for devolution.

Our Vision

To improve the quality of life for present and future generations in Witney by promoting sustainability, inclusivity and community wellbeing.

Our Mission

To make Witney a great place to live, work and visit.



Our Six Strategic Outcomes

Plus, woven through is a golden thread:



WITNEY
TOWN COUNCIL

A Green and Resilient Town

Commit to embedding environmental responsibility into everything we do and achieve carbon neutrality for the Council by 2028, while supporting wider efforts to create a thriving, low-carbon future for Witney



Our Strategic Outcomes

The Council's strategic plan is built upon six fundamental pillars that guide our decision-making and resource allocation

- 1. **A forward-looking Town Council** - We represent residents and businesses on key strategic issues facing the town, ensuring their voices are heard at all levels.
- 2. **An engaged and supported community** - We actively seek engagement with all residents and work with others to enable them to lead safe, healthy, and fulfilling lives.
- 3. **An empowered community** - We encourage collaboration for the overall success of Witney through the facilitation and championing of change programmes and initiatives.
- 4. **A respectful community** - We promote inclusivity and treat all people fairly and with respect regardless of race, sexual orientation, religion, age, or disability.
- 5. **A beautiful Witney** - We continue to improve and develop our open spaces while protecting and enhancing our natural environment.
- 6. **A vibrant local economy** - We promote local businesses and develop locally controlled economies that prioritise Witney while preserving our unique identity and heritage.

Woven through all six pillars is a golden thread – our unwavering commitment to sustainability and resilience – which forms the foundation of a seventh, overarching objective:

- 7. **A Green and Resilient Town** – Rooted in the Council's 2019 Climate Emergency declaration. We are committed to embedding environmental responsibility into everything we do. We aim to achieve carbon neutrality for the Council by 2028, while supporting wider efforts to create a thriving, low-carbon future for Witney.

Strategic Priorities 2025–2029

Over the lifetime of the Strategic Plan the Council will prioritise:

- Enhancing parks, play areas and community spaces
- Strengthening communication and resident engagement
- Tackling climate change and improving environmental resilience
- Securing fair developer contributions to support the town
- Preparing for local government reorganisation and potential boundary changes



Looking Ahead

Witney is a vibrant and historic town with a strong sense of community and civic pride. Through its Strategic Plan, the Council will continue working with residents, partners and local organisations to ensure Witney remains a thriving, inclusive and sustainable town for generations to come.

The full Strategic Plan is available on the Council's website www.witney-tc.gov.uk

PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE REVIEW



The Parks & Recreation Committee continues to oversee the enhancement, development and long-term management of Witney's parks, play areas and sports facilities. The Town Council manages 13 play areas and 25 sports pitches, alongside wider open spaces, and remains committed to ensuring these assets are accessible, sustainable and fit for purpose for current and future residents. Over the past year, work has been shaped by significant capital projects alongside ongoing maintenance responsibilities.

At The Leys, the refurbished Splash Park opened in May and has been extremely well received, delivering improved reliability, reduced water consumption and more engaging interactive features. Progress also continues with the Courtside Hubs project and the relocation of the Council's works depot, which together will enhance sports provision and create additional community space. Careful management of The Leys remains essential to balance organised events, sports with its role as an informal recreational space.



At West Witney Sports Ground, refurbishment of the Clubhouse is underway after many years following close partnership working with the club, and plans for a new 3G pitch are progressing to expand all-weather provision. The site continues to support a wide range of user groups, including West Witney Sports & Social Club, Witney Projectile Range, Witney Lawn Tennis Club and Witney Parkrun. Assistance has also been given to Witney Swifts Cricket Club to strengthen its long-term security and development at the site and Parkrun for temporary toilet facilities.



A new Multi Use Games Area at Raleigh Crescent will soon be delivered in partnership with West Oxfordshire District Council using developer contributions, representing further investment in youth and community sport. Play area improvements have continued across the town, including replacement equipment at Burwell and The Leys, with plans agreed to upgrade basketball facilities at King George's Field MUGA. Inclusive play equipment and interpretation boards have also been supported to widen accessibility and engagement.



The exceptionally hot summer presented challenges for grass sports pitches, with some renovations requiring remedial re-seeding and additional works at Burwell and The Leys. Following wetter winter conditions, most pitches are still performing well. The Committee continues to work closely with local grassroots teams to manage and maximise facilities effectively within available resources.

Work is ongoing with Oxfordshire County Council to deliver a footpath at King George V Recreation Ground. The Council is also awaiting final sign-off for the football pitches and pavilion at Windrush Place and is progressing governance arrangements for a new community trust to manage these facilities on its behalf.

Overall, this has been a year of substantial investment and delivery, balanced with the continued maintenance of existing assets and strong partnership working. The Council remains focused on providing inclusive, accessible and sustainable recreational spaces that support healthy and active communities across Witney and looks forward to the completion of these projects during the next year.



HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE REVIEW

The Committee has overall responsibility for the management and oversight of a broad range of community facilities and services. This includes the management and operation of the Council-owned Public Halls, the administration of Tower Hill and Windrush Cemeteries, and maintenance of the allotments operated by the Witney Allotment Association.

Over the past year, significant progress has been made in strengthening both the commercial sustainability of the Corn Exchange and the wider community offer provided by the Council.

A dedicated Business Plan has been expanded for the Corn Exchange and Burwell Hall, focusing on diversifying income streams while ensuring best value for residents. Programming at the venue has remained varied, with tribute nights, comedy performances, quizzes, theatre productions, and pantomimes attracting strong audiences. Initiatives during the last year have included a low-cost daytime Film Club, successful monthly Open Mic nights supporting local artistic talent, and the introduction of a Seat Sponsorship scheme for the main hall.

The Corn Exchange also hosted the premiere screening of *Los Banditos of Ducklington Lake*, a film produced by a young Witney resident, highlighting the venue's role in supporting local creativity.



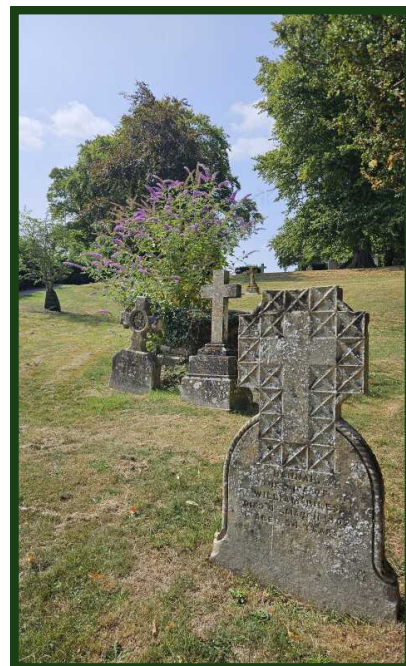
The 1863 Café has continued to thrive, establishing itself as a valued social hub and recently receiving an England Business Award. A designated "Cool Space", this facility was welcomed by residents during the summer heat.

Investment has also been made in the building's facilities and accessibility. Online meeting equipment has been installed, enhancing conference capability and enabling the live streaming of Council meetings, and hearing loops are scheduled for installation in the main hall and gallery to further improve accessibility.

Beyond the Corn Exchange, the popular Tunes on the Square events brought live music to Market Square weekly across the summer, drawing strong community attendance as did the popular VE Day 80th Anniversary event in May which was covered by the BBC.

This Committee is responsible for the management of Tower Hill and Windrush Cemeteries, including the administration of burials and ensuring compliance with all relevant legislation. It also has oversight of the maintenance of the town's two war memorials and ensures that the grounds, trees and boundary features at St Mary's and Holy Trinity closed churchyards are properly maintained in accordance with the Council's statutory responsibilities.

At Windrush Cemetery, new facilities have been delivered in 2025 including an Ashes Scattering Area, a Children's Memorial Garden, and a memorial obelisk, alongside investment in an additional cost-effective ashes section.



The Council has continued to work closely with Witney Allotment Association as tenants for Hailey Road, Lakeside, Newland and Windrush Place allotments and in the last year has supported governance matters, is exploring flooding issues at Lakeside, has replaced fencing and sheds at Newland, and agreed the provision of raised beds at Lakeside allotments to improve accessibility and usability.

STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE REVIEW



The Committee oversees the widest range of responsibilities in the Council, centring its efforts on communications and engaging with the community. Its primary goal is to promote stronger community bonds and improve life for all residents throughout Witney.

In 2025, Community Engagement and Communications Strategies were reviewed and updated to maintain their effectiveness and responsiveness. The Council placed a strong emphasis on clear communication by distributing quarterly newsletters. One of these was sent to every household containing council tax details and the yearly satisfaction survey. A further three editions published online. Additional surveys concerning communications preferences and the Council budget were conducted to collect residents' opinions and guide future improvements.

Collaboration has remained a central focus throughout the year. The Community Window on Market Square brought together more than twenty local groups, while continued and enhanced funding for youth initiatives was delivered via a dedicated £20,000 Youth Grant Scheme, allowing Witney's youth organisations to seek additional funding to support local young people.

The Station's detached youth project received ongoing support, including expanded winter half-term BREAK cafés at the Corn Exchange, alongside sessions such as APCAM's mental health drop-ins, We Game activities, and Home-Start Oxford. The Council also started working with the Witney Chamber of Commerce and made its halls available for senior citizen events, highlighting the importance of accessibility for everyone. Volunteers, community gardeners, and young carers were formally acknowledged for their contributions to the town.



Schools in Bloom returned successfully, alongside well-supported civic Christmas card and carol sheet competitions. The Council marked several national awareness campaigns, including International Women's Day, International Men's Day, White Ribbon Day and Great Big Green Week, the latter promoting a book swap at the 1863 Café while also promoting a local summer dog waste campaign. A summer events guide was produced to help families access local activities.



Brass on the Grass returned for a second season of open-air performances and was well attended despite extreme heat, with one event forming part of Love Your Parks Week. The Council also provided financial support to Witney Music Festival, Witney Carnival, Oxfordshire Play Association and Witney Pride.

Civic commemorations included the annual Remembrance Service, events marking the 80th anniversaries of VE and VJ Days, and recognition of the 85th anniversary of the Battle of Britain, with a commitment to annual flag-raising on designated national days. The Citizen of the Year awards once again celebrated outstanding local contributions.

Christmas lights continue to represent a significant community investment, bringing a sense of joy and togetherness to Witney. Their vibrant displays, made possible in part through sponsorship from local businesses, brighten the town during the festive season and foster a positive atmosphere for all. This tradition not only enhances Witney's visual appeal but also lifts spirits, making the community feel more connected and welcoming. The Town Council further strengthens this Christmas spirit by hosting a successful Advent Fayre for young families, offering memorable events and activities that encourage residents to gather and celebrate.



The Committee also supported a range of community infrastructure improvements, including a new community garden at Queen Emma's Dyke, installation of two grit bins at Windrush Place, and a public bleed kit in the former phone box in Market Square. The Council's flag-flying policy was reviewed, with agreement to fly the Town Crest daily from Council buildings and to establish a working group to consider wider civic pride and national arrangements.



POLICY, GOVERNANCE & FINANCE COMMITTEE REVIEW

This Committee oversees all policy and legal matters and makes recommendations to full Council for approval. It is also responsible for approving Council expenditure and ensuring that appropriate financial procedures and controls are in place and adhered to.

Over the past 12 months, the Town Council has continued to deliver its core services while progressing several key initiatives to enhance the community. The year concluded the Council's 50th Anniversary celebrations, marking five decades of service and providing an opportunity to reflect on past achievements while setting a balanced budget for 2026-27.

Following a well-supported public consultation, the Council secured approval for a loan to deliver agreed projects at West Witney. Residents were informed and invited to comment before any financial commitments were made. The funding will support improvements to the Clubhouse and the development of a new Council depot to serve the sports ground and other Council-owned open and recreational spaces.



Policies and governance arrangements have been reviewed and updated to ensure compliance with current legislation and best practice, while also providing clarity and consistency for residents. This work was recognised through the award of bronze accreditation under the Local Council Award Scheme, reflecting strong standards in governance, transparency and community engagement. An application for the Silver Award is due shortly.



Partnership working has continued to strengthen, including collaboration with amongst others, Courtside Hubs CIC and a strategic partnership with Witney Town FC, the latter with which the Council is progressing plans for a Community Trust to manage the day-to-day operation of Windrush Place Pavilion. These partnerships support greater local engagement and create opportunities for efficiencies, external funding and community-led initiatives.



Routine maintenance of Council-owned land and public spaces remains a priority, including regular grass cutting, general upkeep and responsive repairs. The Council has also continued to press Oxfordshire County Council and others on matters affecting Witney, including the High Street, advocating for timely action in response to residents' concerns.



The Council's grants programme has continued to provide financial support to local organisations and community groups, contributing to wellbeing, resilience and vibrancy within the community, including the enhancement and expansion of youth services via a ring-fenced grant scheme and ongoing support for the West Oxfordshire Community us which helps keep the community connected and combats isolation and loneliness. Grants have been awarded using the General Power of Competence and a full list can be seen on pages 12-1 .

To improve transparency and accessibility, Council meetings are now being broadcast, and IT systems have been upgraded to support the needs of a growing organisation. The Council has also responded promptly to incidents of vandalism, arranging repairs and working with relevant authorities to protect community assets and deter anti-social behaviour.



HOW IS THE TOWN COUNCIL FINANCED?

The precept contributes just 8% of residents' total council tax and supports a wide range of services that benefit the whole community. The Town Council maintains parks, cemeteries, flowerbeds, verges, roundabouts, and other green spaces, ensuring Witney remains attractive and welcoming. The Council also funds community initiatives, including grants, Christmas lights, civic and third-party events, The Station youth work, and the town bus service.

In addition, it is responsible for a variety of local amenities, such as sports pitches, the wheeled sports park, the Corn Exchange (public halls and 1863 café and bar), the lake and country park, street furniture, and allotments. In all, it provides spaces and facilities that enhance everyday life for residents and visitors alike.

The approved budget also allows for prudent retention of earmarked reserves for ongoing and future projects and considers the potential impacts of the devolution of local government, ensuring the Council is prepared for new opportunities and responsibilities.

Average Band D home contributes
£213.35 per annum | **£17.78** per month

The breakdown below shows
how your £213.35 is spent.

Some of the functions and facilities Witney Town Council provides



Community
Buildings

13 Play Areas

Splash Park
Wheeled
Sports Park

2 Closed Churchyards
2 Cemeteries
1 Youth Council
1 Cafe

Bus Shelters
Benches
Noticeboards



Community
and Civic Events



25 Sports Pitches



Floral Displays and
Christmas Lights



Witney Lake and
Country Park (LNR)



3
War
Memorials



Figures in **red** are income items that help reduce your contribution.

Democracy and Governance

Bank Interest/Charges	-£3.38
Corporate Management	£21.56
Democratic Representation/ Management	£14.98
Net Use of Reserves for Revenue	-£6.12
Property Investment	-£4.97

Sports and Recreation

Windrush Place and Raleigh Crescent	£6.12
The Leys (sports pitches & splash park)	£14.74
Burwell QEII Recreation Ground	£4.72
West Witney Sports Ground	£8.30
King George V Recreation Ground	£2.83
Witney Lake and Country Park	£11.96

Public Halls

Burwell Hall	£6.12
Corn Exchange	£13.12
Income from Leased Community Halls	-£0.79

Cemeteries

Tower Hill Cemetery	£15.35
Windrush Cemetery	£12.58
Closed Churchyards	£2.09

Community

Children & Youth Provision	£5.36
Community Bus Services	£2.29
Other Community Activities including Grants, Events, and Newsletters	£14.66
Allotments, Grass Cutting, Amenity Areas, Open Spaces, Street Furniture	£28.30
Play Areas/Equipment	£6.50
Civic Activities inc. Remembrance Sunday & events	£5.08
Christmas Lights	£4.42

Capital Projects

Capital Projects	£45.05
Use of Project Reserves	-£17.52

Witney Town Council has approved a modest increase to its precept for the 2026/27 financial year, resulting in an additional cost of £0.83 per month for residents in an average Band D property. This increase will allow the Council to continue delivering and improving essential local services across the town while planning responsibly for the future.

At a meeting on Monday 2nd February 2026, Councillors confirmed the precept increase. From April, the average Band D property will contribute £213.35 annually, an increase of £9.98 from last year. Witney Town Council remains committed to responsible financial management, reinvesting in the community, and ensuring the town continues to grow sustainably for future generations.

The Council's work is guided by its Vision: "To improve the quality of life for present and future generations in Witney by promoting sustainability, inclusivity, and community wellbeing," and its Mission: "To make Witney a great place to live, work and visit." These principles underpin the Council's commitment to putting people first, protecting and enhancing the natural environment, and ensuring Witney thrives economically, socially, and environmentally for generations to come.

2025/26 GRANT ALLOCATION



Witney Town Council awards discretionary grants to local community organisations working within the town to assist them with what they do, help fund the purchase of new equipment or help with a particular event or activity. It also considers discretionary subsidised hire requests for the letting of its venues.

Applications for discretionary grant funding or subsidised use of recreation grounds or public halls are considered by the council Policy, Governance & Finance Committee.



Date Awarded	Beneficiary	Purpose	Amount
Ongoing	Bright Futures Youth Service	Detached Youth Service in Witney – ‘The Station’	£18,000
Ongoing	Witney Music Festival	By Partnership Agreement – Community Event at The Leys	£10,000
Ongoing	West Oxfordshire Community Transport	Annual grant towards Witney Town Service	£23,500
18 November 2024	Burwell Community Garden	Community Gardening Voucher	£40
18 November 2024	Edible Gardens	Community Gardening Voucher	£40
18 November 2024	Witney Horticultural Society	Community Gardening Voucher	£40
18 November 2024	St Mary's C of E Infant School	Schools In Bloom Voucher	£50
18 November 2024	The Batt C of E Primary School	Schools In Bloom Voucher	£50
18 November 2024	Witney Community Primary School	Schools In Bloom Voucher	£50
18 November 2024	Queen Emma's Primary School	Schools In Bloom Voucher	£50
18 November 2024	Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Primary	Schools In Bloom Voucher	£50
18 November 2024	Madley Brook Primary School	Schools In Bloom Voucher	£50
18 November 2024	Springfield School	Schools In Bloom Voucher	£50
18 November 2024	Windrush C of E Primary School	Schools In Bloom Voucher	£50
18 November 2024	Blake C of E Primary School	Schools In Bloom Voucher	£50
18 November 2024	ICE Centre	Schools/Community in Bloom Voucher	£50
3 February 2025	Lowland Rescue Oxford	A new water trailer	£2,495
3 February 2025	Los Banditos of Ducklington Lake	Subsidised Let & Corn Exchange for local film premiere	£160
3 February 2025	Witney Photo Group	Subsidised Let @ Corn Exchange for annual exhibition	£399
3 February 2025	Annual Bus User's Meeting	Subsidised Let @ Corn Exchange for annual meeting	£80
3 February 2025	Oxfordshire Play Association	Annual grant towards Summer Children's Play Day	£1,000
3 February 2025	Witney Carnival Committee	Contribution towards 2025 Carnival	£2,400
24 March 2025	Queen Emma's Dyke Community Garden	Community Gardening Voucher	£40
31 March 2025	APCAM	Provision of mental health drop-in and We Game Sessions	£3,600
31 March 2025	Witney Pride	Subsidised Let for The Leys	£730
31 March 2025	Witney Carnival	Subsidised Let for The Leys	£1,810
31 March 2025	Witney Music Festival	Subsidised Let for The Leys	£3,280
31 March 2025	Witney Youth Council	Subsidised Let @ Corn Exchange for a cultural event	£205
31 March 2025	Witney Town Band	Subsidised Let @ Corn Exchange for a fundraiser	£205
9 June 2025	Witney in Pink	Subsidised Let @ Corn Exchange to celebrate anniversary	£287
9 June 2025	OCVA	Subsidised Let @ Corn Exchange for an awareness event	£140
9 June 2025	Twinning	Subsidised Let @ Corn Exchange for Youth Twinning Event	£70
23 June 2025	Apollos Clothing	To purchase shoes for the vulnerable in the community	£1,080



2025/26 GRANT ALLOCATION



Date Awarded	Beneficiary	Purpose	Amount
21 July 2025	Witney Flood Group	Funds towards providing the group's services	£800
21 July 2025	Witney Jazz	Subsidised Let @ Corn Exchange for a charity concert	£160
21 July 2025	Aspire	Subsidised Let @ Corn Exchange young people's art showcase	£70
21 July 2025	Ducklington Sports Club	Replacement sporting equipment	1,700
21 July 2025	Tower Hill FC	Replacement equipment	£1,000
21 July 2025	Witney Town Band (Juniors)	New equipment	£1,500
21 July 2025	Home Start Oxford	Grant towards early years & parent services	£11,000
22 September 2025	Witney Thames Valley Police Team	Towards an e-bike for the neighbourhood policing team	£1,000
22 September 2025	Rotary Club of Witney	Christmas Lights Switch-On Event 2025	£2,500
6 October 2025	West Oxfordshire Community Transport	Witney Town Bus Service (additional annual funds)	£2,500
24 November 2025	Witney Town Band	Annual grant towards performing at civic occasions	£660
24 November 2025	Volunteer Link-Up	Annual grant towards Witney volunteering services	£2,000
24 November 2025	Citizens Advice West Oxfordshire	Annual grant for services	£2,000
24 November 2025	Witney Museum	Annual grant for services	£500
24 November 2025	Witney Food Revolution	Subsidised Let @ Corn Exchange for fundraiser	£228
24 November 2025	Burwell Seniors	Subsidised Let @ Burwell Hall for a Christmas Party	£165
2 February 2026	Witney Woodland Volunteers	Towards group costs	£653
2 February 2026	Windrush C of E Primary School	Towards a local history talk	£250
2 February 2026	Be Free Young Carers	Towards Young Carer support in Witney	£2,000
2 February 2026	Oxfordshire Foster Care Association	Towards foster carers and their children, a cinema visit	£400
2 February 2026	Windrush Community Choir	Towards the growth of the group	£2,350
2 February 2026	West Oxon Performing Arts Foundation	Towards the inaugural Festival of Speech, Drama & Theatre	£1,000
			TOTAL

£49,283



Youth Services Grants

Witney Town Council reinstated its Youth Services Grant during the year, making up to £20,000 available to youth-focused organisations across the town. The scheme attracted a record level of interest, demonstrating the strong commitment within the community to supporting young people. Although it was not possible to fund all applications in full, each was carefully assessed against the scheme's objectives. Priority was given to inclusive, preventative, and open-access initiatives that were clearly signposted, accessible, and able to demonstrate measurable benefits for young people in Witney. The scheme will run again in 2026.

Recipients in this year included Buttercross Scouts (£3,500), 4th Witney Girl Guides (£1,000), Parish of Witney (£2,500), Bright Futures to provide a project delivered by The Station, West Oxfordshire Levellers (£1,000), Witney Food Revolution (£2,150), and Yellow Submarine (£2,000).





CLIMATE & BIODIVERSITY COMMITTEE REVIEW

In 2025, the Council created a new Committee to provide clear focus on biodiversity, climate and wider environmental matters. Its establishment reflects the Council's commitment to taking coordinated and proactive action in addressing challenges in these areas and meeting its statutory and policy responsibilities, working collaboratively with partner organisations, agencies and volunteers.

At Witney Lake and Country Park, progress has been delivered in line with an adopted management plan. A new boardwalk has improved accessibility while protecting sensitive ground conditions, and enhanced directional signage from The Leys and at key entrances has better highlighted and connected the site to the wider town. During the year, the Lake and Country Park was awarded Local Nature Reserve status, an important milestone in its protection and long-term management, which, alongside the continued work and dedication of staff and volunteers, contributed to the Council achieving a Gold Award from Thames & Chiltern in Bloom.



Flooding at the Lake remains an ongoing issue. In-house path improvement works were undertaken in the autumn to reduce overtopping and limit polluted water entering the Lake; however, exceptional winter flooding surpassed these measures. The Council has applied for grant funding to deliver more resilient improvements and is working towards achieving Green Flag status in the coming year.

Town-wide biodiversity initiatives have also expanded during the last year. The Council supported No Mow May in appropriate open spaces, participated in the Big Butterfly Count, and contributed to citizen science through tree survey work at Witney's Tiny Forest 'Tychwood'. Yellow rattle was sown at Mill Meadow to encourage wildflower establishment, and habitat enhancements, including tidying and bulb planting, were carried out at Unterhaching Park, with further improvements planned to make planting more sustainable, economic, and resistant to weather extremes while maintaining colourful and varied displays. Wildflower planting has been enhanced on selected roundabouts, and the Council is working with residents to designate nature verges along Burford Road, incorporating these into promoted local walking routes.

Although not directly within its responsibilities, the Council assisted with river clearance and desilting works to support water flow. The presence of avian influenza in the area has been closely monitored, with appropriate precautions taken and public notices displayed where required.

Strategic climate action has progressed across the Town Council's estate, supported by a working group tasked with developing a comprehensive Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan encompassing both Council operations and wider community initiatives.

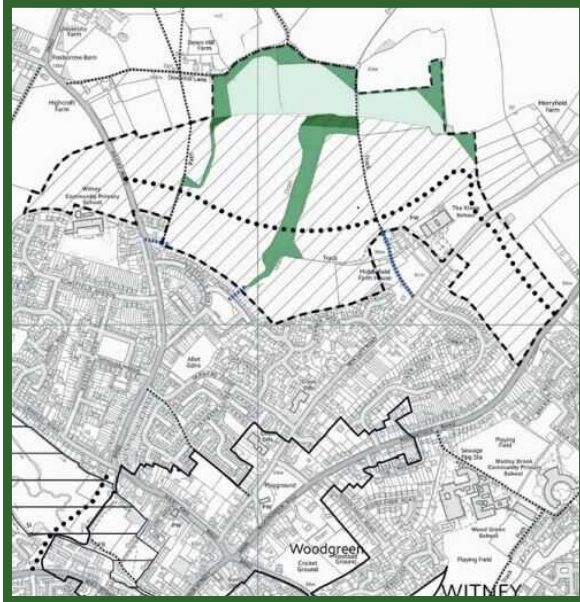
The Council also hosted its first Eco Fair in October to highlight climate issues and provide practical advice to residents on reducing their carbon footprint. In addition, a Thermal Imaging Camera loan scheme was introduced, enabling residents to identify heat loss in their homes and take steps to improve insulation and energy efficiency.





PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE REVIEW

Witney Town Council is a statutory consultee on planning and licensing applications within the town and comments on significant developments outside its boundary which affect the local community. In this role, the Council reviews and comments on applications using its detailed local knowledge and understanding. Decisions on planning applications are made by West Oxfordshire District Council as the local planning authority; however, the Town Council's responses are submitted to ensure that Witney's best interests are represented.



Over the past year, the Council reviewed 126 planning applications and 8 licensing applications. In addition, it received information from the Witney Traffic Advisory Committee, considered 2 planning appeals, 4 parking regulation orders, and 11 other consultations, covering matters such as street naming, Shores Green junction works and other regulatory proposals affecting the town.

When considering planning applications, the Council focuses on relevant material planning considerations. Attention is given to issues such as flood prevention, highway and parking impact, design and heritage, environmental considerations (including replacement of trees where they are removed), and the wider impact on the community. For larger developments, including for those outside of the current parish boundary, the Council seeks to ensure that appropriate infrastructure and community benefits are secured, including contributions through developer agreements to support and enhance local facilities and services.

During the year, the Council also responded to several wider planning policy consultations, which included input into emerging planning policy, contribution to Local Plan development through to 2043, matters relating to community governance, and national planning and licensing policy consultations aimed at maintaining local decision-making at the heart of the planning system.

WITNEY TRAFFIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Advisory Committee meets quarterly and provides a forum to discuss traffic, parking, bus services, and consultations on schemes and projects affecting Witney. It comprises Town Councillors, committee members, local organisational representatives, and officers from the various tiers of local government covering the town; it is administered by Witney Town Council on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council.

During the year, the Committee continued to press for changes to the Fiveways roundabout at Corn Street due to safety concerns, and for footpath improvements in West Witney and Madley Park. Members were updated on delays to the Witney High Street enhancement works and expressed frustration at the slow progress. Other matters discussed included the A40 Shores Green scheme, civil parking enforcement, and associated proposals in Witney. Requests relating to road markings, bus services and other traffic issues were also raised and referred to the relevant departments.

The Committee also organised Witney's second Bus Users' Meeting in October, bringing together service providers and residents to discuss current and future services. The event will now become an annual, free community meeting supported by the Town Council. The next meeting is planned for May 2026 to gather feedback ahead of Oxfordshire County Council's consideration of bus contracts later in the year.

Speeding concerns are also forwarded to this Committee. The Witney Town Community Speedwatch scheme, administered by the Committee have held three sessions in recent months. The total number of vehicles exceeding the speed limit was 76 with a maximum speed recorded in a 20mph zone of 48 mph. 33 letters were sent to drivers. In order for the scheme to be successful further volunteers are needed to help run and co-ordinate the sessions. If you are interested, please contact communities@witney-tc.gov.uk for details.



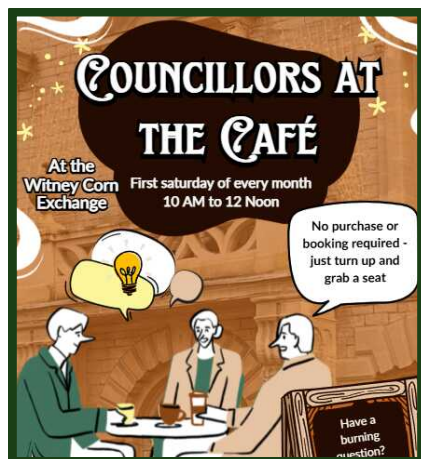
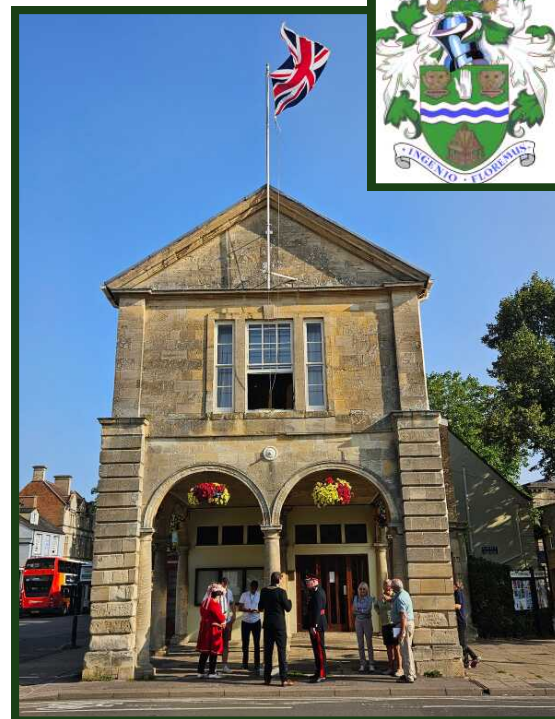
COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP

Over the past year, the Town Council has strengthened its accessibility, advocacy and strategic direction. A Corporate Strategic Plan for 2025–2029 has been adopted, setting clear priorities for growth, service delivery and community development as the Council enters the final year of its current term.

While Local Government Reorganisation proposals for 2027 do not directly change the role of town councils, Members and officers have engaged in discussions to prepare for potential impacts. The Council has also formally requested a boundary review from West Oxfordshire District Council considering planned development and increasing pressure on infrastructure and services.

The Council has continued to advocate on behalf of residents, lobbying Oxfordshire County Council and West Oxfordshire District Council on a range of issues including potholes, cycling signage and surfacing at St Mary's churchyard, flag protocols, and refurbishment of the High Street.

The Council supported measures to address dangerous pony and trap racing along the A40, expressed opposition to proposals for part night-time street lighting where concerns were raised, advised that public conveniences at Langdale Gate should remain an asset of the District Council, and responded to a recent consultation on the future running of the Fire Service in Oxfordshire.



A Past, Present and Future Working Group was formed to strengthen civic pride and to address complex and sometimes divisive national and local issues in a constructive and inclusive way. The Town Crest now flies daily from the Town Hall, with additional flag-raising events planned for St George's Day, Armed Forces Day, Oxfordshire Day and Historic County Flags Day. Twinning links with Le Touquet and Unterhaching were reaffirmed, the UN flag was flown to mark its anniversary, and international ties were further strengthened through civic engagement.

Partnership working remains central as seen in other reports. The Council has worked closely with the Witney Flood Group, supporting de-silting works at Bridge Street and meeting riparian responsibilities, and has agreed to administer a Witney Town Centre Forum to support local businesses. Monthly "Councillors at the Café" sessions continue to provide residents with informal opportunities to engage directly with their elected representatives.

WITNEY YOUTH COUNCIL

Witney Youth Council brings together young people aged 11–18 to work with Witney Town Council and local organisations, giving young residents a voice and encouraging their involvement in local decision-making.

Now in its second year, members have supported community events including Witney Carnival and the Christmas Lights Switch-On, where they helped young carers and older residents.

A memorable highlight was meeting the Youth Council of Le Touquet, Witney's twinned town in France, who travelled to Witney to meet their counterparts and learn about the town.

The Chair and Vice Chair also represented young people at the 2025 Remembrance Day service, laying a wreath at the War Memorial.

The group has developed its own logo and launched a youth events survey in local schools to help shape future activities and recently met with the local MP to discuss issues affecting young people.



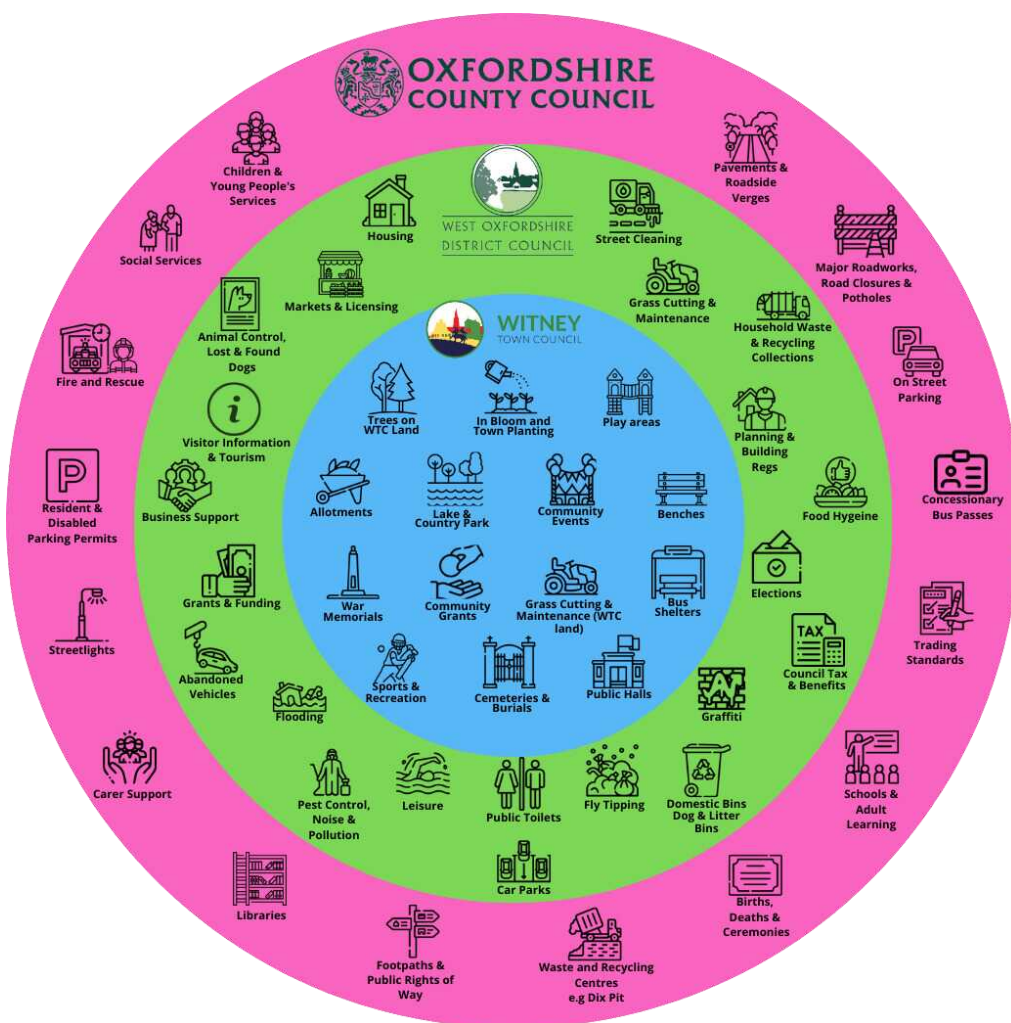
WHAT SERVICES ARE PROVIDED BY WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

Councils are local authorities with different responsibilities and duties. There are three tiers of council that provide services to our town. As a result there can be a few confusing crossovers which sometimes make it difficult for residents to understand who does what.

Witney's local parish council is Witney Town Council, which only provides services to residents within the town itself. Other towns and villages have their own parish council.

Witney Town Council offers the services you would associate with community and recreation. Most of the town's Parks and Play Areas, the Lake and Country Park, some Civic and Community events, Allotments, Community Grants for local groups and Bus Shelters. Recently it has allocated budgets to fund Youth Services in the town.

It is a consultee on Local Planning. It can comment on applications, however, does not make the final planning decision.



It also has the responsibility of being the burial authority for the town and looks after the town's cemeteries.

West Oxfordshire District Council is the next tier up. This is the council that provides services that might be considered more domestic. Waste and Recycling, Housing, Council Tax, Business Development, Trading Standards, larger Community Grants and makes decisions on Local Planning.

These services are available to all the towns and villages within West Oxfordshire.

It also maintains some parcels of land right across the district and takes on some land maintenance tasks, contracted out to it by the County Council.

Oxfordshire County Council is the top tier of local government and has the biggest budget.

It looks after the big stuff such as Education and Libraries, Transport and Social Care.

It is also responsible for the Maintenance and repair of roads (potholes) pavements and most verges.

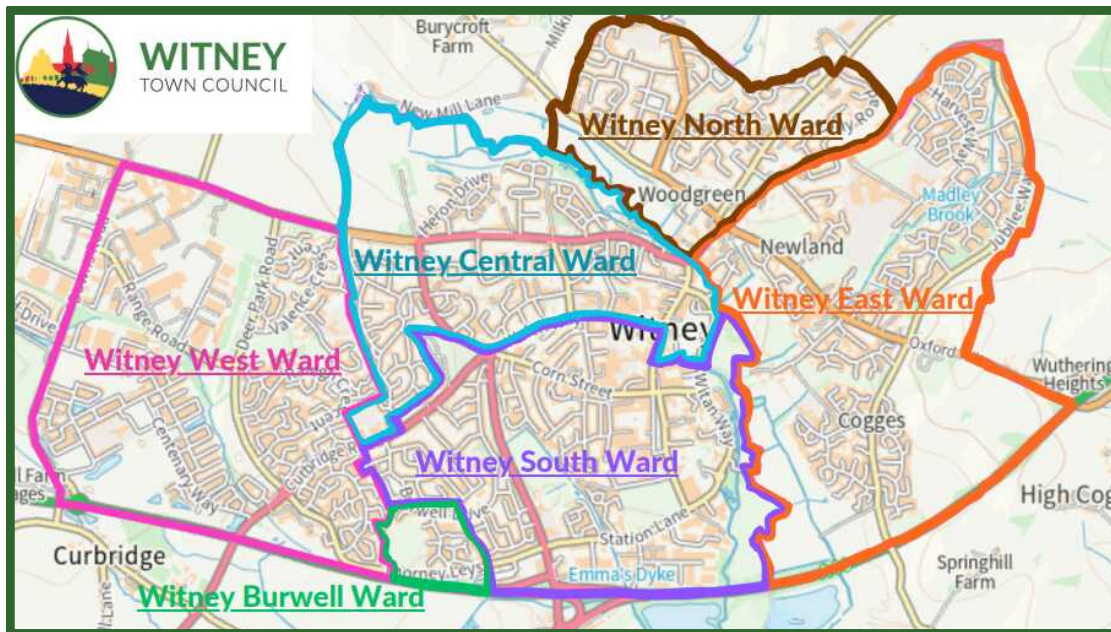
 Contact form on OCC website 01865 792422 General Enquiries Number 8.30am - 5pm, Monday - Thursday and 8.30am - 4pm Friday	 customer.services@westoxon.gov.uk 01993 861000 Available from 9am to 2pm Monday to Friday	 info@witney-tc.gov.uk 01993 704379 Available from 9am to 5pm Monday to Thursday, 9am to 4.30pm Friday
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2025/26 MEETING DATES & COUNCILLORS

Local Councillors are elected by the community to decide how the council should carry out its various activities. They represent public interest as well as individuals living within the ward in which he or she has been elected to serve a term of office.

They have regular contact with the general public through council meetings, telephone calls or surgeries. Surgeries provide an opportunity for any resident to go and talk their ward councillor face to face and these take place on a regular basis.

Councillors are not paid a salary for their work at the Town Council, nor do they receive allowances. By law, all members of the Council are required to complete a declaration of interest form, the details of which are published online. You can access this information by visiting the [Councillors page](#) on the Town Council's website, where you can select the specific Councillor you are interested in.



Witney West Ward Councillor Thomas Ashby Councillor Geoff Doughty Councillor Jane Doughty	Witney North Ward Councillor Duncan Enright Councillor Sandra Simpson Councillor Dean Temple
Witney Burwell Ward Councillor David Edwards-Hughes	Witney East Ward Councillor Joy Aitman Councillor Andy Bailey Councillor James Robertshaw Councillor Ruth Smith
Witney Central Ward Councillor Abdul Mubin Councillor Georgia Meadows Councillor Denis Newcombe	Witney South Ward Councillor Owen Collins Councillor Rachel Crouch Councillor Jack Treloar

Stay Informed About Council Business

Public Meetings

- All Council meetings are open to the public, unless specifically noted otherwise
- Members of the public have the opportunity to ask questions during the public participation section of these meetings.
- Meeting dates are regularly updated on our official website

Meeting Information

- Agendas are published at least three clear working days before each meeting
- Meeting minutes are promptly and regularly published

COUNCIL MEETINGS



All meetings held at the Corn Exchange, Witney unless otherwise stated on the published agenda			
Annual Council Meeting	7pm	Wednesday 6th May 2026 Monday 17th May 2027	
Planning & Development	6pm	• 21st April • 12th May • 2nd June • 23rd June	• 14th July • 4th August • 25th August • 15th Sept • 6th Oct • 27th Oct • 17th Nov • 8th Dec • 5th Jan 27 • 26th Jan 27 • 23rd Feb 27 • 16th March 27
Climate & Biodiversity	6pm	• 19th May	• 8th September • 12th January 27
Full Council	7pm	• 22nd June • 13th July • 12th Oct	• 7th Dec • 14th Dec • 4th Jan 27 • 22nd Feb
Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments	6pm	• 8th June • 14th Sept	• 9th Nov • 18th Jan 27 • 15th March 27
Parks & Recreation	6pm	• 1st June • 7th Sept	• 2nd Nov • 11th Jan 27 • 8th March 27
Policy, Governance & Finance	6pm	• 22nd June • 28th Sept	• 23rd Nov • 1st Feb 27
Stronger Communities	6pm	• 15th June • 21st Sept	• 16th Nov • 25th Jan 27 • 22nd March 27
Witney Traffic Advisory	3pm	• 29th June • 22nd Sept	• 12th Jan 27 • 23rd March 27

The Annual Town Meeting for 2027 will be on Wednesday 24th March at 7:30pm.

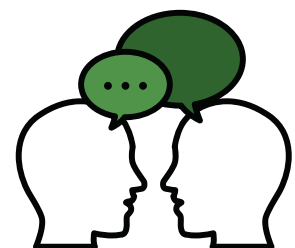
We Want to Hear From You!

Witney Town Council is committed to engaging with our local community. We value the insights, concerns, and suggestions of residents and professionals working within our wards, and we're dedicated to understanding and addressing the diverse aspects of life in our area.

Get in Touch

We welcome your input on any matters affecting our community. If you would like to:

- Discuss our recent reports
- Share your concerns
- Propose community improvements
- Seek more information



Please contact your local Town Councillor or reach out to the Town Clerk:

Witney Town Council Town Hall, Market Square Witney, OX28 6AG

Contact Details:

- Telephone: 01993 704379
- Email: info@witney-tc.gov.uk
- Website: www.witney-tc.gov.uk

Office Hours:

- Monday- Thursday 8:30 am–5 pm
- Friday 8:30 am–4:30 pm
- Saturday & Sunday- Closed



We look forward to hearing from you and working together to enhance our community.



Witney Town Council
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