

**MEETING OF THE
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

Held on Monday, 16 February 2026

At 7.00 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney

Present:

Councillor J Doughty (Vice-Chair, in the Chair)

Councillors:	G Meadows	D Edwards-Hughes
	T Ashby	D Newcombe
	D Enright	J Robertshaw
	R Smith	S Simpson
	R Crouch	J Treloar
	G Doughty	
Officers:	Sharon Groth	Town Clerk
	Adam Clapton	Deputy Town Clerk
	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
Others:	Inspector C Ball (Thames Velley Police)	

86 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors O Collins, J Aitman, A Mubin, A Bailey, D Temple.

Councillor J Treloar had advised he would arrive late to the meeting.

87 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest from Members or Officers.

88 MINUTES

That, the minutes of the meetings held on 8 December 2025, 15 December 2025, 5 January 2026 and 2 February 2026 were received.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the meeting held on 8 December 2025, 15 December 2025, 5 January 2026 and 2 February 2026 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

89 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There was no public participation.

90 **WITNEY COMMUNITY POLICING ISSUES**

Inspector Ball attended on behalf of Thames Valley Police and provided an update on current policing matters.

He thanked the Council for its support in funding four power-assisted bikes for the neighbourhood team, which were proving effective. Recent anti-social behaviour (ASB) incidents, some serious, were being addressed, and youth engagement work was expected to continue over the summer and would hopefully be supported by The Station, who he was pleased to see were using the café at the Corn Exchange for a half-term cafe that evening.

The Christmas period had been generally positive, with good cooperation from local licensees. Assistance had been offered in relation to flooding, and residents were encouraged to make contact if required.

Flags displayed on lampposts were not a criminal matter and fell within the remit of OCC as the highway's authority; however, any instances perceived as intimidating should be reported and that only flags obstructing CCTV cameras or perceived by TVP as an immediate danger would be removed by them.

Regarding pony and trap racing on the A40, new signage and policing powers had proved effective, with a previously planned large-scale event relocated by the organisers outside of the forces area following police liaison.

A representation would be submitted to the planning authority objecting to the McDonald's request to extend their hours to 24 hours on the grounds of ASB, litter, and in particular vehicle-related ASB concerns.

In response to question from Members, it was advised that patrol visibility varied as the team also covered surrounding villages; plain-clothed officers had been effective in addressing illegal high-speed e-bike use. Checks in November 2025 had identified no issues with delivery drivers operating, and any further intelligence to the contrary would be reviewed.

Resolved:

That, the verbal report be noted.

Inspector Chris Ball left the meeting at 7:25pm

91 **AN UPDATE FROM WITNEY OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCILLORS AND WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCILLORS**

West Oxfordshire District Council

Councillor R Crouch reported that Community First's research relating to the Smith's Estate was ongoing and continuing to support improvements to the livelihoods of individuals and families in need within the area.

Councillor R Crouch further advised that the recent Youth Partnership meeting had been well attended, with contributions from a range of organisations, including The Station, and APCAM; it

demonstrated a strengthening of community partnership working and enhanced links with local organisations.

Councillor D Enright reported that work on the Local Plan 2043 was continuing and included a number of ambitious objectives. It was further noted that the Salt Cross Garden Village scheme had received approval of its plan and was progressing to the next stage, including exploration of proposals to attract world-class employers.

Oxfordshire County Council

Councillor J Robertshaw reported that pothole statistics had recently been published. Contractor performance issues were currently being reviewed, and further assessment was underway.

He also advised that the Oxfordshire County Council precept had been agreed. However, it was anticipated that financial pressures were likely to present greater challenges in the next financial year.

Lastly, he reminded Members of the Local Government Review consultation which remained open and that their views were being actively sought.

Resolved:

That, the verbal updates be noted.

92 REPORT BACK FROM THE COUNCILLORS ON THE WORK WITH EXTERNAL BODIES WHERE THEY SERVE AS THE TOWN COUNCIL'S NOMINATED REPRESENTATIVE

Councillor R Crouch reported in relation to the **Witney Twinning Association** that preparations were underway for the forthcoming visit from representatives of Unterhaching and Le Touquet, scheduled to take place from 2 May.

Councillor Crouch also provided an update from **Witney Town Charity**, advising that a review of rental arrangements was being undertaken, alongside a review of the grants awarded by the Charity. Consideration was being given to how funds are best utilised and capital funds invested to maximise community benefit.

Councillor D Newcombe reported from the **RAF Brize Norton Local Consultation Group** that a 16-week closure to fixed-wing aircraft operations was scheduled to facilitate a major construction programme. The works were intended to ensure the continued safety of staff and vehicles on site. It was noted that approximately 800 construction personnel would be present during the works, which was welcomed due to the anticipated positive impact on local business revenue.

Councillor R Smith reported from the **Witney Infrastructure Neighbourhood Group (WING)** that they were eagerly awaiting the resubmission of the North Witney developers planning proposals.

Councillor Smith further updated Members on the **Windrush Against Sewage Pollution** group, advising that a docudrama highlighting the group's work was due to be broadcast on Channel 4. The group had also continued its examination of Thames Water's financial position as part of its ongoing campaign.

Resolved:

That, the verbal reports be noted.

93 **PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE - 9 DECEMBER 2025, 6 JANUARY & 27 JANUARY 2026**

The Chair of the Committee presented the above minutes to Council and moved their acceptance.

P58-5 Planning Application 25/03152/S73 McDonalds, Ducklington Lane

In light of additional comments from Thames Valley Police and residents, the response submitted by the committee was discussed following which a proposal was made by Cllr D Enright, seconded by Cllr R Smith that the submission be amended to that of an objection, a vote of which the result was:

For:	Eight
Against:	Two
Abstention:	One

It was therefore agreed that the following additional response be submitted "Anti-social behaviour was a matter raised by Witney Town Council in its original submission and, in light of information and concerns received from Thames Valley Police, the Council is content for its comments to be treated as a formal objection"

Resolved:

1. That, the minutes of the meetings held on 9 December 2025, 6 January & 27 January 2026 be received and any recommendations therein approved and,
2. That, an additional objection submission be made in respect of application 25/03152/S73.

94 **CLIMATE & BIODIVERSITY COMMITTEE - 13 JANUARY 2026**

The Vice Chair of the Committee presented the above minutes to Council and moved their acceptance.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Climate & Biodiversity Committee held on 13 January 2026 be received and any recommendations therein approved.

95 **PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE - 12 JANUARY**

The Chair of the Committee presented the above minutes to Council and moved their acceptance.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee held on 12 January 2026 be received and any recommendations therein approved.

96 **HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE - 19 JANUARY**

The Chair of the Committee presented the above minutes to Council and moved their acceptance.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee held on 19 January 2026 be received and any recommendations therein approved.

97 **STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE - 26 JANUARY**

The Chair of the Committee presented the above minutes to Council and moved their acceptance.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Stronger Communities Committee held on 26 January 2026 be received and any recommendations therein approved.

98 **POLICY, GOVERNANCE & FINANCE COMMITTEE - 2 FEBRUARY**

The Chair of the Committee presented the above minutes to Council and moved their acceptance.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee held on 2 February 2026 be received and any recommendations therein approved.

99 **CIVIC ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Council received the report of the Mayor and Mayor's Secretary which highlighted the civic engagements of the Mayor and Deputy since the last meeting.

In the absence of the Mayor his deputy provided the update and touched on specifically the Oxon Army Cadet force award ceremony highlighting the work of one of the council's staff, who led a Cadet unit as a volunteer. She asked that a letter be sent on behalf of the Council to acknowledge the commitment.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, a letter of thanks be issued to the member of staff.

Cllr Jack Treloar joined the meeting at 7:52pm

100 **HEALTH & SAFETY**

The Council received the report of the Compliance and Environment Officer regarding Health & Safety matters.

Members were pleased to see the continued training of employees in both tractor use and food safety.

Resolved:

That, the report be noted.

101 **VANDALISM & ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR**

The Council received a list of vandalism and anti-social reports since the last meeting along with additional details on the items in the report from the Committee Clerk.

Resolved:

That, the reports and verbal update be noted.

102 **FUTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN OXFORDSHIRE**

The Council received notification of the consultation being held to gather opinions on the proposals for Local Government Re-Organisation.

Members received a verbal update from the Deputy Town Clerk advising that the consultation was open and welcomed both the Council and individual councillor's responses. It was noted that the Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils (OALC) had encouraged parish and town councils to submit a response.

The Leader of the Council updated Members on a recent event she had attended in relation to the proposals. She reported that she felt limited information and assurance had been provided regarding the capacity of parishes to expand and take on additional services under any future arrangements.

During discussion, Members expressed support for responding to the consultation and considered the available options. It was suggested that the Council use a free text format to submit a single response reflecting the views of the Council.

A Member suggested that it be delegated for consideration by the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee; however, the Town Clerk advised that this would not be feasible due to the consultation closing prior to the next scheduled PGF meeting. It was noted that a special meeting could be convened if Members so wished.

It was agreed that submitting a written statement would be more effective than responding to the consultation questions individually, in order to clearly articulate that the impact on town and parish councils must be central to any future decision-making.

Members identified the following key points to be included in the Council's response:

- That Town & Parish Councils should be appropriately recompensed for any additional services it assumes.
- That representatives from civic, education and traffic bodies should be considered for inclusion on neighbourhood action groups, with the WTC recognised as a primary body.
- That the WTC should take a leading role, supported by robust Service Level Agreements.
- That WTC is capable of taking on an enhanced leadership role.

- That neighbourhood action groups must have a meaningful role in policy development and must be properly funded to ensure long-term sustainability.
- That surrounding villages rely on Witney as a service centre, placing significant demand and responsibility on the Town Council.

It was therefore proposed by Councillor R. Smith, seconded by Councillor R. Crouch and unanimously agreed that Officers draft a response for circulation ahead of its submission.

Members were also encouraged to submit individual responses in addition to any corporate response, recognising that Councillors may hold differing personal views.

Resolved:

1. That, officers prepare a single written corporate response for circulation to Members prior to submission by the consultation closing date of 26 March and,
2. That, Councillor submit their own contribution to the consultation.

103 **COMMITTEE CALENDAR 2026/27**

The Council received the Calendar of Committee meetings for the 2026/27 municipal year reflecting the change to five meeting cycles across the year, as recommended for approval by the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee.

Resolved:

That, the Calendar of Committee meetings for 2026/27 be adopted by the Council.

104 **REGISTER OF INTERESTS, HOSPITALITY & DATA PROTECTION**

The Council received the report of the Deputy Town Clerk this time providing a reminder to Councillors of their obligations concerning the declarations of their interests, hospitality and data protection.

Members were reminded that should they have any questions regarding the report or had a request for training that they should contact the Deputy Town Clerk.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, Members note their obligations regarding Register of interest, Gifts & Hospitality and Data Protection.

105 **COMMUNICATION FROM THE LEADER**

There was no communication from the Leader.

Cllr David Edwards-Hughes left the meeting at 8:18pm

106 **NALC OPEN LETTER**

The Council received the correspondence from, the incumbent Chair of the National Association of Local Councils which set out his forward-looking strategic vision for strengthening governance, influence, and partnerships across parish and town councils.

Resolved:

That, the correspondence be noted.

During the following item Cllr David Edwards-Hughes returned to the meeting at 8:23pm

107 **CIVILITY & RESPECT - CLLR STATEMENT OF ASSURANCE**

The Council received details of the introduction of a Councillor's Statement of Assurance by the National Association of Local Council's Improvement and Development Board.

The Deputy Town Clerk advised that he would be preparing a report on the subject for consideration by the Council at a future meeting however, the statement of assurance was introduced to further support the Civility & Respect pledge that the Council had already signed by allowing individual Councillor to demonstrate further commitment to the parish that they serve.

Resolved:

1. That, the correspondence be noted and,
2. That, a report be prepared by officers for consideration at a future meeting.

108 **WODC - COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW REQUEST RESPONSE**

The Council received the correspondence of West Oxfordshire District Council in response to the Council's letter requesting a Community Governance Review (CGR) for Witney.

Members were encouraged to learn that this would be considered following the conclusion of the Local Government Reorganisation, it was unanimously agreed that the Council push for the commencement of the CGR at the earliest point, thought to be June 2026.

Resolved:

1. That, the correspondence be noted and,
2. That, the Council continue to press for the CGR to be carried out as soon as possible after the direction of Local Government Reorganisation had been agreed.

109 **QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

A Member asked that Councillors ensure they reply to the invites to participate in Councillor at the café events in order that the necessary arrangements can be made.

110 **SEALING OF DOCUMENTS**

Resolved:

That the seal of the Council be affixed to any documents arising from decisions taken by this meeting of the Council.

The meeting closed at: 8.25 pm

Chair