

ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING
OF WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Wednesday, 6 May 2026

At 7.07 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney

Present:

Councillor J Doughty (Chair)

Councillors:	A Mubin	G Doughty
	J Aitman	D Edwards-Hughes
	T Ashby	G Meadows
	O Collins	D Newcombe
	R Smith	J Robertshaw
	D Temple	S Simpson
	D Enright	J Treloar
	R Crouch	
Officers:	Adam Clapton	Deputy Town Clerk
	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
Others:	Six members of the public.	

Prior to the commencement of the official business the Mayor Elect, Cllr J Doughty acknowledged the hard work and achievements of the outgoing Mayor Cllr Andy Bailey, who was unfortunately unable to attend the meeting.

Additionally, the Mayor's Chaplain, Reverend Dr Hester Jones blessed the Town Council for the year ahead.

218 ELECTION OF TOWN MAYOR

Following the appointment of Cllr J Doughty as Mayor-Elect at the meeting of the Council on 13 April 2026, the Chair invited any further nominations for the position of Town Mayor for the ensuing municipal year, none were forthcoming.

All Members were in agreement and Cllr J Doughty was therefore nominated and duly elected Chair/Mayor by the Council.

Resolved:

1. That, Cllr Jane Doughty be elected Town Mayor/Chair of Witney Town Council for the ensuing municipal year 2026/27 and,
2. That, the Declaration of Acceptance of Office be signed following the meeting in the presence of the Proper Officer of the Council.

219 **ELECTION OF DEPUTY MAYOR**

The new Mayor invited nominations for the position of Deputy Town Mayor for the ensuing municipal year. One nomination was made and therefore Cllr S Simpson was duly elected Deputy Mayor by the Council with unanimous approval.

Resolved:

1. That, Cllr Sandra Simpson be elected Deputy Town Mayor/Chair of Witney Town Council for the ensuing municipal year 2026/27 and,
2. That, the Declaration of Acceptance of Office be signed following the meeting in the presence of the Proper Officer of the Council.

220 **ELECTION OF LEADER**

The Chair invited nominations for the position of Leader of the Town Council. Cllr R Smith was nominated and re-elected by the Council unanimously.

Resolved:

That, Cllr Ruth Smith be elected as the Leader of the Town Council for the ensuing municipal year 2026/27.

221 **ELECTION OF DEPUTY LEADER**

The Chair invited nominations for the position of Deputy Leader of the Town Council. Cllr J Aitman was nominated and re-elected by the Council unanimously.

Resolved:

That, Cllr Joy Aitman be elected as the Leader of the Town Council for the ensuing municipal year 2026/27.

222 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor A Bailey.

223 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest from Members or Officers.

224 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 April 2026 were received.

Minute 190 – Cllr O Collins asked that congratulations be forwarded to the Mayors of Le Touquet and Underhaching following their elections.

Minute 202 – The Leader provided a reminder to Members to contact the Committee Clerk if they were yet to sign the Civility & Respect Statement of Assurance; she also reminded those present of the need to be respectful in their communications and interactions with Officers. In

closing she was joined by the Mayor in thanking all council staff for the support that they provide.

Resolved:

1. That, letters of congratulations be issued to the Mayors of Witney's Twinned towns and,
2. That, Members sign the Civility & Respect Assurance Pledge and note the need to be respectful in their communications with officers and residents and,
3. That, the minutes of the meeting held on 13 April 2026 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

225 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

The Committee adjourned for this item.

Former Mayor Brenda Churchill addressed the Council, offering her congratulations and best wishes to the newly elected Mayor. Her remarks were warmly received and appreciated by all those present.

The Committee reconvened.

Five Members of the public left.

The Mayor provided her thanks for those that had attended and for the service that they provide(d) to the Town both in the past and currently.

226 **ADOPTION OF MEETINGS CALENDAR**

The Council received the updated proposed calendar of meetings and formally noted the change from six to five cycles of meetings across the municipal year.

A Member noted that he was surprised annually to see the Town Hall open between Christmas & New Year. Other Councils were not open during this time, and it seemed right that this issue should be looked at by the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee.

Resolved:

That, the calendar of Council meetings for 2026/27 be adopted.

227 **APPOINTMENT OF ANY NEW COMMITTEES**

Following consideration there was no request for additional Committees.

Resolved:

There were no new committees to be appointed.

228 **REVIEW (OR REQUEST FOR THE TOWN CLERK TO REVIEW) ANY TERMS OF REFERENCE**

Following a proposal from the Leader the Council, seconded by Cllr D Temple it was agreed unanimously that the terms of reference for the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee,

Personnel Sub Committee and Disciplinary & Grievance Panel be reviewed to ensure they aligned on staffing and human resources matters.

Additionally, Members were advised by the Deputy Town Clerk that each committee would have the opportunity to review their remits at their first meeting within the 2026/27 cycle of meetings.

Resolved:

1. That, the terms of the of the Policy, Governance & Finance and Personnel Sub Committees, along with the Disciplinary & Grievance Panel be reviewed and,
2. That, Members consider any changes to the Committees on which they sit prior to the first meetings in 2026/27.

229 **APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES, SUB-COMMITTEES & WORKING PARTIES AND THE ELECTION OF CHAIRS**

Members received the report of the Deputy Town Clerk and considered appointments to standing committees, sub committees, working parties and task & finish groups. In addition, the Chairs were also elected at this juncture.

The following appointments were proposed, seconded, and agreed unanimously:

Planning & Development Committee

G Doughty (Chair)	D Temple
J Aitman	G Meadows
J Treloar	R Smith

Climate & Biodiversity Committee

S Simpson (Chair)	D Newcombe
J Doughty	G Meadows
A Mubin	R Smith
J Aitman	J Robertshaw

Parks & Recreation Committee

J Aitman (Chair)	D Temple
R Crouch	J Doughty
D Edwards- Hughes	S Simpson
J Treloar	R Smith

Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments

R Crouch (Chair)	J Treloar
G Doughty	D Enright
J Robertshaw	R Smith
J Doughty	O Collins

Stronger Communities Committee

T Ashby (Chair)	A Bailey
G Meadows	A Mubin
D Enright	J Doughty
S Simpson	R Smith

Policy Governance and Finance Committee

R Smith (Chair)	J Doughty
J Aitman	R Crouch
S Simpson	G Doughty
T Ashby	

Personnel Sub- Committee

R Smith (Chair)	J Doughty
J Aitman	R Crouch
D Newcombe	G Doughty
T Ashby	

Disciplinary & Grievance Panel

To be constituted from the pool of Members who do not hold a seat on either the Personal Sub Committee or Policy, Governance & Finance Committee.

Community Voices (was Inclusivity & Diversity Panel)

R Smith	T Ashby
J Aitman	R Crouch
S Simpson	G Doughty

Climate Action Working Party

S Simpson	D Edwards-Hughes
D Enright	J Aitman
J Robertshaw	

Community Governance Task & Finish Group

O Collins	R Smith
A Bailey	G Meadows
S Simpson	R Crouch
D Edwards-Hughes	

Witney: Past, Present & Future Working Party

J Treloar	R Crouch
G Meadows	A Mubin
J Robertshaw	R Smith

There were thanks to the members of this Working Party, along with officers for facilitating such an engaging and excellent event to mark St George's Day.

(Cllr D Edwards-Hughes left the meeting briefly so was not present for the vote of the agreement to the membership of the CG T&F Group and the WPPF Working Party)

Members unanimously agreed that the VJ & VE Day 80th Anniversary Task & Finish Group be disbanded as their task had been successfully completed.

It was proposed by Cllr T Ashby, seconded by Cllr D Enright that the Pavillion Working Party be disbanded. Although the pavilion was yet to be handed over from West Oxfordshire District Council to the Town Council, it was felt the Working Party was no longer required as any outstanding work would principally be under the remit of the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee. A vote was taken; other than one abstention all other Members were in agreement.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the membership of the standing committees, sub committees, working parties and task & finish groups and their Chairs be agreed as detailed above and,
3. That the VJ & VE Day 80th Anniversary Task & Finish Group and Pavillion Working Party be disbanded.

230 **APPOINTMENT TO ADVISORY COMMITTEES & EXTERNAL BODIES/OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS**

The Council received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk concerning nominations for advisory committees and external bodies/outside organisations.

The Chair sought nominations for vacancies on outside organisations all to serve until the Annual Council Meeting following the next ordinary election in 2027.

Witney Traffic Advisory Committee	J Aitman, D Enright S Simpson R Smith
Oxfordshire Association of Local Councils [Larger Councils]	R Crouch
West Witney Sports & Social Club	D Newcombe R Smith
Witney Town Band	R Smith
Witney & District Twinning Association	J Doughty (Mayor) R Crouch O Collins
West Oxfordshire Museum Centre	O Collins
St Mary's Church Preservation Trust	J Doughty (Mayor)

Volunteer Link Up	J Aitman
RAF Brize Norton – Local Consultation Working Group	D Newcombe
Witney Allotment Association	R Crouch
Witney Youth Council Mentors	G Meadows S Simpson J Aitman
Friends of the Cemeteries	D Enright J Doughty
Home Start Champions	J Aitman A Bailey S Simpson
Lower Windrush Valley Project	A Bailey
West Oxfordshire Community Transport	D Enright
Witney Fair Trade Action Group Champion	R Smith
Witney Infrastructure Neighbourhood Group	R Smith D Enright
Witney Community Profile Steering Group	J Aitman
Witney Flood Group Liaison	D Temple
Windrush Pavillion Community Trust	J Aitman R Crouch G Doughty
Witney Town Centre Forum	A Bailey D Edwards-Hughes G Meadows

Nominees Serving as Trustees

The following were proposed as Town Council nominees to serve on outside bodies for a four-year term of office.

At the request of the Witney Town Charity who had a suitably skilled individual to serve as a trustee, Cllr J Aitman agreed to stand down to be replaced by Matthew Lee who would serve as a town council nominated trustee.

Witney Town Hall Charity	Cllr R Crouch & Mrs L J Semaine
Witney Town Charity	Mr B Beadle, Cllr R Crouch, Mr C Woodward & Mr M Lee

Witney Education Foundation (WEF)

Mr C K Woodward

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the appointments to advisory committees & external bodies/outside nominations be agreed as detailed above and,
3. That, arrangements for the provision of updates from Members to Full Council meetings remain the same.

231 REVIEW OF ANY DELEGATION ARRANGEMENTS

The Council received a verbal update from the Deputy Town Clerk to outline that the formal review of the Scheme of Delegation was carried out in June 2025. The next review would be due in June 2027.

Resolved:

1. That, the verbal update be noted and,
2. That, no formal review be undertaken at this time.

232 STANDING ORDERS

The Council noted that, due to wider service demands on Officer time, the review of the Standing Orders had not been completed in time for this meeting. A revised version would be presented to the meeting of the Council on 22 June 2026.

A request arose from Cllr T Ashby for the inclusion of an order to allow the submission of questions from members to the Leader ahead of meetings of the Council. It was agreed that Officers prepare a draft of wording for consideration with would include a review after three cycles of meeting to review if the task was too onerous.

Resolved:

1. That, the update be noted and that the review of the Standing Orders be presented to the meeting of the Council on 22 June 2026 and,
2. That, the review includes an order to reflect the submission of Members questions to the leader.

233 FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

The Council noted that, due to wider service demands on Officer time, the review of the Financial Regulations had not been completed in time for this meeting. A revised version will be presented to the meeting of the Council on 22 June 2026.

Resolved:

That, the update be noted and that the review of the Financial Regulations be presented to the meeting of the Council on 22 June 2026.

234 **CODE OF CONDUCT**

Following The Leader's address to Members to remind them of the importance of maintaining high standards of conduct and behaviour, it was proposed by Cllr D Enright, and seconded by Cllr G Doughty that the Council reaffirmed its agreement to the Oxfordshire Code of Conduct. Members were unanimously in agreement.

Resolved:

That, the Council reaffirms its agreement to the Oxfordshire Code of Conduct.

235 **COUNCILLOR ATTENDANCE REGISTER**

The Council received an annual attendance register for Members of the Council for the 2025/26 municipal year.

The Leader of the Council thanked Members for their attendances and highlighted that it should be understood when viewing such figures that many factors have influenced individual Councillor's attendance such as illness, bereavement and family or dependent commitments.

A reminder was issued by the Committee Clerk that apologies from Members should be passed directly rather than any third party or after the meeting has commenced. It was subsequently agreed that future reports should show clearly where apologies are not received by Officers prior to meetings.

Additionally, it was highlighted that the number of attendances of Cllr R Smith should read 53.

Resolved:

That, the annual Councillor attendance register for 2025/26 be noted.

Before closing the meeting, the newly elected Mayor, Cllr J Doughty, thanked Members for their support for both her and Cllr G Doughty over the past year, and expressed her appreciation for the time, effort and commitment Councillors gave alongside their busy personal and professional lives. She also echoed that apologies be passed on to the officers when Councillors were unable to attend.

The Mayor remarked that Witney was a wonderful town and expressed her confidence that 2027 would be a great year for the community. In closing, she encouraged everyone to continue working together with kindness, civility, integrity and accountability.

The meeting closed at: 8.21 pm

Chair