MEETING OF THE
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Monday, 22 June 2026

At 7.30 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney

Present:
Councillor J Doughty (Chair)

Councillors:	A Bailey	A Mubin
	O Collins	G Doughty
	G Meadows	D Newcombe
	J Aitman	S Simpson
	T Ashby	J Treloar
	R Smith	
Officers:	Adam Clapton	Deputy Town Clerk
	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
	Nigel Warner	Responsible Financial Officer
Others:	One member of the public.	

330 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Enright, R Crouch and D Edwards-Hughes.

331 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest from Members.

332 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

The Committee adjourned for this item.

The Council received representations from a resident regarding the recent designation of the Burford Road verges as a Roadside Verge Nature Reserve (RVNR). The resident thanked the Council and neighbouring parishes for their support and encouraged continued biodiversity initiatives, including consideration of biodiversity impacts in relation to future works at Tower Hill Cemetery.

The Leader thanked the resident for his continued engagement and contribution to local biodiversity projects.

The Committee reconvened.

The Member of the public left the meeting at 7:45pm.

333 **ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN (AGAR) 2026**

The Council received a copy of the return along with a verbal update from the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) in respect of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for 2025/26 under its obligations pursuant to the Accounts & Audit (England) Regulations 2015.

The Policy, Governance & Finance Committee (PGF) had scrutinised the documents and recommended approval and adoption at the meeting held earlier in the evening.

The RFO summarised the key elements of the AGAR for those Members not present at the earlier meeting. In relation to Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement, Members heard that the PGF Committee had recommended that questions 1 to 8 and 10 be answered "Yes" and question 9 be marked "Not Applicable".

The RFO also highlighted the restatement of the fixed assets figure contained within Section 2 – Accounting Statements. Members were advised that the figure represented the historical purchase value of the Council's assets rather than their current value and that, in his opinion, any amendments, however minor or clerical in nature, should be reported in the interests of transparency.

Finally, it was noted that the External Auditor's review was due to be completed by 30 September 2026, following which the External Auditor Report and Certificate would be presented to Council for consideration of any comments raised.

Members were unanimous in agreement to approve the submission of the Annual Governance and Accountability Report for 2025/26 as presented.

Resolved:
1. That, the Annual Internal Audit report be noted and,
2. That, the Annual Governance Statement at Section 1 of the Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2026 be approved and adopted with questions 1 to 8 and 10 answered “Yes” and question 9 marked as “Not Applicable” and,
3. That, the Statement of Accounts at Section 2 of the Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2026 be approved and adopted and,
4. That, the draft Notice of Public Rights and Publication for 2025/26 be noted.

334 **STANDING ORDERS REVIEW**

The Council received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk (DTC), this matter having been deferred from the Annual Council Meeting (06.05.2026 Minute No. 232 refers).

In relation to Standing Order 5(k), Members noted that the Council now live broadcasted its meetings and that the proposed amendment was necessary to reflect this. Members also agreed that the amendment to Standing Order 5(q) would provide greater clarity in the recording of Members’ voting decisions.

A Member asked for some minor amendments within the document to improve clarity and ensure gender neutral language.

With regard to Standing Order 10(a)(xiv), Members were reminded that the inclusion of a provision relating to written questions to the Leader had been proposed at the Annual Council Meeting. However, at this meeting, the Member who had originally proposed the amendment requested that the additional wording be removed, having reflected that the provision was not necessary.

The recording of meetings was also discussed, with some Members questioning whether the wording should be strengthened. Officers advised that legislation protects the rights of individuals to record public meetings and that there was no requirement for recording to be disclosed. Members noted that elected Members should always remain mindful of their conduct and comments, both within and outside the Council Chamber.

Following consideration, Members agreed to approve the amendments to Standing Orders 5(k) and 5(q) and that the Standing Orders would stand adjourned until the meeting of the Council on 13 July 2026 to allow any further discussion.

Resolved:
1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the amendments to Standing Orders 5(k) and 5(q) be approved and
3. That, the proposed additional wording to 10(a)(xiv) be removed and,
4. That, the Standing Orders stand adjourned until the meeting of the Council on 13 July 2026 where they may be discussed further.

335 **FINANCIAL REGULATIONS REVIEW**

The Council received and considered the report of the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) concerning revisions to the Council's Financial Regulations.

Members were advised that the proposed changes had been made to improve transparency and ensure continuity of practice following the Council's transition to electronic banking arrangements.

A Member requested a number of minor amendments to ensure the consistent use of the term "Members" throughout the document in place of "Councillors". The Committee was content that these drafting amendments be made.

The RFO also provided clarification regarding amendments to the Council's procurement procedures, explaining that these changes had been introduced to improve transparency and consistency.

During consideration of the document, a Member raised a question regarding paragraph 4.8 concerning restrictions on Precept voting by Members with amounts of unpaid Council Tax. The RFO advised that the provision had been included in line with model guidance issued by the National Association of Local Councils (NALC). However, he would review the wording further and seek clarification from NALC before reporting back to Members. It was noted that, subject to that review, no amendment would be made.

Resolved:
1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the amendments to the Financial Regulations be approved subject to minor drafting amendments to improve consistency and clarity and,
3. That, Officers review paragraph 4.8 with the National Association of Local Councils and report back to Members and,
4. That, the Financial Regulations are adopted at the meeting of the Council on 13 July 2026.

5. That, an annual review be undertaken in May or June of each year.

The meeting closed at: 8.18 pm

Chair