

Witney Town Charity

Registered Charity No. 202996

PO Box 638
Witney, Oxon
OX28 9QP

Tel: **(Redacted)**

Email:

witneytowncharity@gmail.com

28 Sept 2026

Witney Town Council
51B Market Square
Witney
OX28 6AG

For the attention of Adam Clapton, Deputy Clerk.

Dear Adam

Witney Town Charity

Our charity is going through some significant changes including the appointment of a new Clerk Lyn Absolom and Deputy Clerk Barry Beradle. Lyn will be your main point of contact on the email above.

The other important change is to move from being a Charity to become a Charitable incorporated Organisation or CIO. This is on the advice of the Almshouse Association and in laymen's terms means that the Charity has legal responsibility for its activities rather than the Trustees, which is the current situation

To implement the actions required to become a CIO we have engaged solicitors who are experienced in this area and one of their main tasks is to rewrite our Governing Document. As this was last done in the 1950's it gives us the opportunity to address how we currently operate and one area for review is the number of Trustees and your Council's involvement in nominations.

The CIO process is being driven on behalf of all Trustees by Dr Paul Watson, a resident of Witney and ex GP who has been a Trustee for many years and therefore very familiar with the town and our involvement within it.

He has asked that we bring to your attention this letter

"I am writing on behalf of Witney Town Charities. We are in the process of changing the legal status of the charity into a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). As part of this work, we need to rewrite our governing document, and we are taking the opportunity to update it to reflect modern realities and changing needs. As you will be aware, our charity currently has 14 trustees of which 6 are nominated by Witney Town Council. At times, when we have needed specific skills or expertise, we have asked the Council to appoint particular individuals, which you have done. In our new constitution, we intend to word the section on trustees in a way that gives us a little more flexibility. The exact wording will be written by our

solicitors but in essence we would like it to say that “the body of trustees will have at least 14 trustees of which up to 6 could be nominated by the Town Council”. It would be very helpful to the Charity if the Town Council were prepared to reply to this letter to state that the Council has no objections to our proposed wording about the number of trustees.

*If you needed to discuss this with me before replying formally, I would be happy to discuss it by email **(Redacted)** , phone **(Redacted)** or face to face.*

We would like to set up our CIO with the minimum delay in order to facilitate some essential repairs to our almshouses. We would really appreciate an early response from you, which would help enormously in getting our new document approved by The Charity Commission.

Yours faithfully

Dr Paul Watson (Trustee of Witney Town Charities responsible for CIO matters)

Your Council may like to consider how much if any involvement you need to have with our Charity as your work, like ours, gets more complex by the year. We don't know why in the 1950's it was thought necessary for you to have trustees of the charity but assume this was probably to protect the heritage of Witney, of which the almshouses form an important part. However I can assure you that we are committed by our Governing Document to maintain the almshouses in a good state of repair and in fact are about to start major refurbishment and upgrading. The other aspect may be to protect the vulnerable residents of the town but our reach has expanded to the West Oxfordshire area, particularly as far as our Grants are concerned.

Therefore, Adam, this may be a good opportunity to review where we jointly go in the future and we look forward to your Council's comments. However if you could note Paul's comment about timescale this would be very much appreciated.

We look forward to your response.

Many thanks

Yours sincerely

Ashley

Ashley Farmer
Chair of Trustees