

**CLIMATE, BIODIVERSITY & PLANNING COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

Held on Tuesday, 16 June 2020

At 6.00 pm in the VIRTUAL MEETING VIA ZOOM - Virtual Meeting

Present:

Councillor R Smith (Chair)

Councillors:	J Aitman	M Jones
	L Ashbourne	A McMahon
	V Gwatkin	A Prosser
Officers:	Sharon Groth	Town Clerk
	Adam Clapton	Office Manager
	Angus Whitburn	Compliance and Environment Officer
Others:	none.	

P132 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for her absence was received from Cllr Bolger.

P133 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest in matters to be discussed at the meeting.

P134 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no members of the public wishing to make representation.

P135 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIR

The Chair invited nominations for the position of Vice Chair of the Committee.

RESOLVED: that Councillor Andrew Prosser be elected Vice Chair for the Municipal year.

P136 PLANNING MINUTES

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the Planning & Development Committee meeting held on 10 March 2020.

RESOLVED: that minutes be noted

P137 PLANNING RESPONSES 25 MARCH - 27 MAY 2020

The Committee received and considered the Planning Responses submitted during the Covid-19 lockdown between 25 March and 27 May 2020.

RESOLVED: that the consultee planning responses submitted to West Oxfordshire District Council during the Covid-19 lockdown between 25 March – 27 May 2020 be noted (this delegation having been resolved at the Extra-Ordinary Meeting of the Council held on 20 March 2020, minute no. 112(3)).

P138 **WITNEY TRAFFIC ADVISORY MINUTES**

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the Witney Traffic Advisory Committee held on 14 January 2020 and also the notes from a Special Witney Traffic Advisory Committee held on 5 June 2020.

In relation to the meeting held on 5 June on the Covid-19 related traffic measures being implemented by WODC, a member commented on confusion that had arisen as it was presented as if it would come into action on 15 June and it hadn't – there had been a lack of proper communication. The Town Council had only heard that WODC had been involved at the special Traffic Advisory meeting. They clearly hadn't had time to get things in place. It was clear that the Town Council would like active travel measures but had no power to take it forward. It could only advocate for the people of the town although there was a split between those in favour and those not in favour. There followed a discussion about what had happened.

RESOLVED:

1) that the minutes of the Witney Traffic Advisory Committee meeting held on 14 January 2020 and the notes of a Special Witney Traffic Advisory Committee Meeting held on 5 June 2020 be noted;

2) that Cllr Ashbourne as Leader would write to WODC expressing disappointment with the communication on the introduction of a COVID-19 related active travel plan and asking for better communication going forward.

P139 **COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE**

Members received and considered the draft Terms of Reference for the new Committee. A member felt that the council should firm up the concept of being carbon neutral by 2028. She felt that this should state that the Council is looking to be carbon neutral in its operations by 2028 and will encourage residents to be more environmentally conscious. She wanted this to be clear that it was not realistic to expect the whole town to be carbon neutral by 2028.

The Chair agreed. Events held on our land should also work towards being carbon neutral.

The Town Clerk commented that she was pleased to hear that members wanted this to be a very clear element in the Terms of Reference, as she had been led to believe initially it was something quite different when the motion was originally presented to Council last year.

A member referred to scope 1 – all use of fossil fuels and scope 2 – use of electricity, and this would be incorporated into the wording.

RESOLVED: that the Terms of Reference for the Committee as presented be agreed with the addition of some wording explicitly on the Council's commitment to Carbon neutrality by 2028 – Cllr Ashbourne would work on these with the Chair and they would be circulated to the Committee for approval.

P140 **PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

The Committee received and considered a list of Planning Applications from West Oxfordshire District Council.

RESOLVED: that the comments, as per the attached schedule, be forwarded to West Oxfordshire District Council.

P141 **CORN STREET BUS SHELTER**

Members discussed a request from the resident to move the bus shelter outside their new build property on Corn Street so that they could put in an entrance to a driveway. The bus shelter had originally been covering one window of the property and extensive negotiation had taken place between the developers and the Town Council, spanning two years, to agree a new siting for it. Oxfordshire County Council, Thames Valley Police and Stagecoach bus company had also been involved.

The Committee all agreed that it would not be possible to relocate it again.

RESOLVED: the Town Clerk sends a response to the resident explaining that a lot of work, consideration and negotiation had gone into agreeing the position of the bus shelter with the developer and that it would not be possible to move it.

P142 **CLIMATE & BIODIVERSITY SUB-COMMITTEE MINUTES**

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2019.

RESOLVED: that the minutes be noted.

P143 **WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL - HOUSING STOCK CORRESPONDENCE**

The Committee received and considered a letter from the portfolio holder for the Environment at West Oxfordshire District Council.

RESOLVED: that the correspondence be noted and that the Chair and Vice Chair write back to the portfolio holder for the environment pushing for specific measures for the District to lead on post lockdown.

P144 **LAKE & COUNTRY PARK MANAGEMENT PLAN**

Members received and considered the report of the Town Clerk.

The Town Clerk gave a brief background to the item, which stretched back to 2016. She advised that advice would be needed how to manage the land successfully. The Committee discussed how to move this issue forward, with members concerned that they did not have enough knowledge to make decisions on how the land might be managed. Members also discussed who the Council could reach out to assist with this.

A member referred to the Park Ranger who had been employed in the past and wondered if this might be a way forward. The Town Clerk conformed that a qualified Park Ranger had been

employed to maintain the area some time ago. Members felt that a full-time post might be too much.

A member was very keen to utilise the Wychwood Project as she said that they already had a plan that encompassed not only the lake and country park but additional adjoining land owned by the District and County Councils.

The Town Clerk advised that the Town Council should probably work with the Lower Windrush Valley project who had helped in the past and proposed that the Council needed a vision for the lake and country park before a management plan could be thought about. The LWVP sat under the County Council's umbrella. She felt that they would be keen to help.

Members then proceeded to discuss the vision for the lake and country park.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted and :

- 1) that the vision for the lake and country park was for it to be actively managed for biodiversity and for access for residents to enjoy safely;
- 2) that Council explores active management and decides if that takes the form of a ranger or whether Community groups will offer that sort of service;
- 3) that the Wychwood Project is approached as the Council understands that they have plans for the whole Windrush area in Witney – Cllrs Smith and Prosser would meet with them and Olivia Thornton who had previously contacted the Council about tree planting;
- 4) that the Compliance and Environment Officer engages with the Oxford City Council Team for some local input.

P145 **ACTIVE TRAVEL**

The Chair advised that ideas had been put to Oxfordshire County Council in mid-May. She proposed that she and the Vice Chair worked on an Active Travel Infrastructure Plan to bring back to the Committee within the next few meetings.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Chair and Vice Chair work on an Active Travel Infrastructure Plan to bring back to the Committee within the next few meetings;
2. That the Committee writes to the District Council asking it to initiate a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan

The meeting closed at: 8.00 pm

Chair