

## FULL COUNCIL

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**Date:** 27 July 2020

**Title:** Position of Town Crier

**Contact Officer:** Office Manager – Adam Clapton

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### Background

Members may recall the Town Council held an informal competition at the Witney Carnival in July 2019 for a Town Crier led by Cllr D Enright in his Mayoral year. The informality of the volunteer position to help promote Witney was confirmed to the Council on 29<sup>th</sup> July 2019, minute number 375(b) refers,

The Council received and considered the report of the Mayor. A Town Crier and a Deputy had been chosen at the Carnival as a bit of fun, and it had not been meant to cause complications. The lady selected was going to buy her own outfit and the Mayor/Council would invite her along to suitable events, such as the Witney Carnival, Witney Christmas Lights Switch-on and Town Council's Advent Fayre.

**RESOLVED:** that the report be noted

### Current Situation

The Town Council has a new Mayor for 2020/21 so it is a good opportunity to review and clarify the position of Town Crier, a year after the above decision.

Witney has not previously had an official Town Crier as historically the Mayor/Chair of Witney Town Council, by nature of the role as civic figurehead of the town (and first citizen) fulfils this purpose; he/she is elected to represent the residents of Witney and the Town Council at civic engagements in the town.

There are currently no Town Criers registered to Oxfordshire towns on the Ancient & Honourable Guild of Town Crier's (AHGTC) website <http://www.ahgtc.org.uk/towns/> although several Council's in Oxfordshire have employed the services of Town Criers in the past. It is understood that Town Criers are usually sought by contacting one from the registered list, one exception to this is Abingdon-upon-Thames Town Council who have separate arrangements.

In order for the position to be officially recognised, per the 'How to Recruit a Town Crier' guidance from the Ancient & Honourable Guild of Town Crier's Website, a job description, official application and trial cry would need to be advertised and take place - the holder of the title would be a representative of the Town Council and hold a privileged position in the community. If the Council resolves to 'employ' a Town Crier, members should also consider whether the administration of this position should be through the Town Council (a potential draft job description is attached as **Appendix A** to this report for information).

The current volunteer position is held by Jean Postlethwaite-Dixon, who it should be noted has carried out engagements with enthusiasm and gusto in the town during 2019-20 and has been a committed advocate/promoter of local community events and businesses.

### **Environmental impact**

Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make regarding its facilities and services it operates.

### **Risk**

In decision making Councillors should consider any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

As a representative of the Council it would need to ensure that the Town Crier would conduct themselves appropriately and not bring the Council into disrepute, and not mis-use their position for their own gains. Consideration should probably be given to DBS checking.

### **Financial implications**

- There is no budget set for a Town Crier
- There is no budget/resource for the Town Council administering the Town Crier position

### **Recommendations**

Members are invited to note the report and consider the following:

1. Consider the role of Town Crier in Witney and whether the Town Council would like to make this a formal role affiliated to the Town Council; and,
2. If yes, consider the application process for this role; and,
3. Consider how the position will be administered.