

**MEETING OF THE
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

Held on Monday, 27 July 2020

At 7.00 pm in the VIRTUAL MEETING VIA ZOOM*

Present:

Councillor J Aitman (Chair)

Councillors:	L Duncan	D Enright
	L Ashbourne	A D Harvey
	T Ashby	M Jones
	R Bolger	J King
	D Butterfield	A Prosser
	O Collins	R Smith
	H Eaglestone	D Temple
Officers:	Nicky Cayley	Democratic Services Officer
	Adam Clapton	Office Manager
	Sharon Groth	Town Clerk
Others:	4 members of the public.	

216 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for her absence was received from Cllr Gwatkin.

217 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Ashby declared an interest in agenda items relating to the County Council as he was an officer of the County Council and Cllr Temple declared an interest in the item on "Health and Safety" as he was a friend of the proprietors of the fair.

218 **MINUTES**

The Council received and considered the minutes of the Council meeting held on 8th June 2020. There were no matters arising from the minutes to be discussed.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 8 June 2020 be agreed as a correct record, and signed by the Chair.

219 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

The meeting adjourned so that County Councillor Laura Price could address the Council in support of the motion on the agenda.

Following this address, the meeting reconvened.

220 **MOTION**

This item was moved up the agenda with the express permission of the Chair, in order that Cllr Price could hear the debate.

The motion was presented by Cllr Ashbourne and as Cllr Gwatkin was unable to be present, seconded by Cllr Collins. In her address Councillor Ashbourne clarified that this motion was to facilitate a meeting of key stakeholders and explained the background to it. All members were in favour of the motion.

RESOLVED: that the motion as follows be adopted:-

Witney Town Council notes:

- That the grassroots response to the Covid19 pandemic during lockdown was a lifeline to so many residents in the town, and provided meaningful support for Local Authorities and organisations who otherwise may have been overwhelmed.
- This demonstrates the power and mutual benefits of collaboration and shared responsibility.
- Support is most impactful when it is joined up and the experience of lockdown has shone a light on gaps in provision, barriers faced by residents and opportunities for a more integrated approach.

Therefore Witney Town Council commits to:

- Convene a 'Build Back Better' partnership group - extending invites to local authorities and the voluntary sector to ensure a joined up and holistic approach to supporting residents in the future and developing community resilience. The aim of this group will be to identify opportunities for creative approaches to meeting the needs of our community, addressing barriers and developing a local approach which ensures all residents have the knowledge and confidence to seek and access help when they need it.

221 **AN UPDATE FROM WITNEY OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCILLORS AND WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCILLORS**

Cllr Duncan Enright – West Oxfordshire District Council

Cllr Enright gave updates on the Witney Resilience Hub, the Eynsham Garden Village, reopening of leisure centres, the Eat Out to Help Out Scheme and the licences for pavement café culture.

Cllr David Harvey – West Oxfordshire District Council

Cllr Harvey gave an update on some District Council initiatives including the design of the Garden Village and lessons learned during the pandemic.

Councillor Laura Price – Oxfordshire County Council

Cllr Price provided an update on the active travel fund of which Oxfordshire had only received 50% of what it had hoped for. It was working hard in its bid for the second round of funding. She also advised that the County Council was preparing an emergency budget as there was a current deficit of £24,000,000. The A40 improvements were being brought forward and a new director of Public Health had been appointed.

Councillor Luci Ashbourne – West Oxfordshire District Council

In response to a member's question, Cllr Ashbourne advanced that she had spoken to James Mills at the District Council about the cycle symbols painted on the roads and had been told that they were to encourage bikes to stay the right side of the barriers on High Street.

Another member commented that this could not be correct as the symbols were also on Bridge Street where there were no pedestrian barriers.

A substantive discussion about many aspects of cycling ensued.

RESOLVED: that the verbal update from Witney District and County Councillors be noted.

222 **REPORT BACK FROM THE COUNCILLORS ON THE WORK WITH EXTERNAL BODIES WHERE THEY SERVE AS THE TOWN COUNCIL'S NOMINATED REPRESENTATIVE**

Members did not have anything to report back due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

223 **MINUTES OF COMMITTEES AND SUB COMMITTEES**

a) CLIMATE, BIODIVERSITY & PLANNING COMMITTEE - 16 JUNE, 30 JUNE & 21 JULY 2020

The Chair presented the minutes of the Climate, Biodiversity and Planning Committee held on 16 June, 30 June and 21 July 2020 and moved their acceptance.

Matters Arising

Minute P138 – a member asked if Cllr Ashbourne had written to the District Council yet. She confirmed that she had and had received a positive response on information sharing.

Minute P141 – a member asked if the Town Clerk had written to the resident on Corn Street. She replied that a letter had been sent and that no response to that had been received.

Minute P143 – a member asked if the letter had been sent to the portfolio holder for the Environment at WODC. The Chair of the Committee said that she had sent a letter and she would be speaking more about these issues with the portfolio holder.

A member asked in general how many of the Council's objections were upheld by WODC. The Chair of the Committee replied that it was not very often that the Committee's responses were contrary to the final decision made by WODC.

The Chair of the Committee drew members attention to the Infrastructure development plan and active travel infrastructure plan in minute 213. She encouraged members to add to them as required and advised of the minutes were approved, this would also approve the two plans.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meetings of the Climate, Biodiversity and Planning Committee of 16 June, 30 June and 21 July 2020, be received and any recommendations therein approved.

b) SPORT & PLAY COMMITTEE - 22 JUNE 2020

The Vice Chair of the Committee presented the minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2020 and moved their acceptance.

Matters Arising

A member asked for progress on minute SP151 (hoggin path for Parkrun) and minute SP154 (sports facilities option paper). The Town Clerk explained that both items had needed approval from Council at tonight's meeting before they could be progressed and that Officers were still very busy dealing with Covid-19 measures. However she was aware that parkrun were actively seeking experts from within the community to assist them with the design of the hoggin path.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held on 22 June 2020 be received and any recommendations therein approved.

c) HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE - 29 JUNE 2020

The Chair of the Committee presented the minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2020 and moved their acceptance.

Matters Arising

Minute H162 – A member asked if there had been any progress on renewable energy. The Town Clerk replied that the Compliance and Environment Officer was working on this.

Minute H163 – A member asked if there was a timeline for the new allotments. The Town Clerk replied that paperwork was being dealt with currently but there was no date set yet.

The Office Manager advised members that the Operations and Estates Officer

had asked him to inform the Council that a badly diseased Beech tree was being removed from Tower Hill cemetery and that it was hoped that benches could be made from the remains.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2020 be received and any recommendations therein approved.

d) STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE - 6 JULY 2020

The Chair of the Committee presented the minutes of the meeting held on 6 July 2020 and moved their acceptance.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held on 6 July 2020 be received and any recommendation therein approved.

e) POLICY, GOVERNANCE & FINANCE COMMITTEE - 13 JULY 2020

The Chair of the Committee presented the minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2020 and moved their acceptance.

Matters Arising

Minute F200 – A member felt that the Council should have a proper ICT audit via a consultant rather than purchasing piecemeal items. The Town Clerk replied that the Council's team was relatively small and so far staff had coped well during the pandemic with some Officers utilising their own laptops to work from home. But as there was to be an organisational review shortly she would look at ICT and current provisions at the same time, reporting back to a future meeting

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held on 13 July 2020 be received and any recommendation therein be approved.

f) CORN EXCHANGE WORKING PARTY - 29 JUNE 2020

The Chair of the Working Party presented the minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2020 and moved their acceptance.

Members had also been circulated with two visual identity designs for the Corn Exchange and the Office Manager asked if a final decision had been made.

A debate followed with differing opinions being put forward by members. The majority favoured the second design incorporating an ear of corn.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2020 be received and any recommendations therein be approved and that the second design be selected as the logo.

Cllr Bolger joined the meeting at 7.35pm.

224 **SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS**

RESOLVED: that as the meeting was expecting to extend beyond two hours in length, standing order 48 be suspended in order to allow the meeting to continue.

225 **CIVIC ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Council received and considered the report from the Mayor on events she had attended/participated in.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted.

Cllr Harvey left the meeting at 8.47pm.

226 **ANNUAL GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN [AGAR] 2019/20**

The Town Clerk explained that the AGAR had already been reviewed by the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee at its meeting on 13 July 2020 but the Council needed to formally agree and adopt it.

RESOLVED:

1. that the Annual Governance Statement at Section 1 of the Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2020 be approved, and formally adopted by the Council;
2. that the Statement of Accounts at Section 2 of the Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2020 be approved, and formally adopted by the Council;
3. that in light of the above the Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) for 2019/20 be formally agreed and adopted by the Council.
4. that the unaudited Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2020 be noted.

227 **WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL IMAGE & REBRANDING**

Members received and considered rebranding of the Council, updating and having a “uniformed/corporate” identity throughout with a new Council logo, letterhead and newsletter template, as referred by the Stronger Communities Committee of 6 July 2020.

There followed a discussion on the proposals.

RESOLVED: that the logo, letterhead and newsletter template as presented be adopted.

228 **CONSULTATION ON MODEL MEMBER CODE OF CONDUCT**

Members received and considered the LGA Draft Member Code of Conduct consultation. The Town Clerk encouraged all members to complete this as individuals as well as forming a collective response on behalf of the Council.

A Member suggested that it was more appropriate for Members to respond as individual Councillors rather than forming a collective response on behalf of the Council.

RESOLVED: that members should complete this as individuals by the deadline of 17 August.

229 **POSITION OF TOWN CRIER**

The Council received and considered the report of the Office Manager.

Members discussed whether to formalise the position of Town Crier and some expressed concern that a proper “recruitment process” had not been followed. Members also discussed whether the Chamber of Commerce could facilitate the position.

The Town Clerk advised members that the role was purely civic and not as an employee of the Council, as there was no remuneration for the position.

RESOLVED: that the position of the Town Crier is formalised under the umbrella of the Town Council – the current postholder would remain in post until May 2021.

230 **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

The Town Clerk referred to a confidential e-mail she had circulated on Friday, in relation to Witney Feast. A meeting had been held with the operator of the fair in relation to operating a Covid-19 Secure event. Her e-mail contained advice from insurers and also advice sought by officers. Subsequently the Town Clerk had contacted the Director of Public Health at Oxfordshire County Council, to see if there was any guidance and she had also contacted the West Oxfordshire Safety Advisory Group and was awaiting a response.

There followed a debate on how to proceed, guidance received and information given by the fair operators so far, and the Council’s responsibility as landowner, as its shared liability. Members were aware that there were other Council’s in a similar position with the same dilemma, and it was considered beneficial to pool advice on operating a Covid-19 safe event. The Town Clerk would make contact with colleagues from the other Town Councils.

Cllr Jones left the meeting at 9.32pm

RESOLVED: that an Extra Ordinary Council Meeting is held once the Town Clerk has received advice from the County’s Director for Public Health, the Safety Advisory Group and establishes

what the other larger Towns who operate similar sized fairs such as Oxford City, Banbury, Thame and Abingdon are doing.

231 **COMMUNICATION FROM THE LEADER**

There was no communication from the Leader.

232 **CORRESPONDENCE**

There was no correspondence for consideration.

233 **QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

There were no questions to the Leader of the Council.

234 **SEALING OF DOCUMENTS**

RESOLVED:

that the seal of the Council be affixed to any document arising from decisions taken by this meeting of the Council.

The meeting closed at: 9.52 pm

Chair