

**MEETING OF THE
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

Held on Monday, 12 October 2020

At 7.00 pm in the Virtual Meeting Room via Zoom

Present:

Councillor J Aitman (Chair)

Councillors:	L Duncan	V Gwatkin
	L Ashbourne	A D Harvey
	T Ashby	M Jones
	R Bolger	J King
	D Butterfield	A McMahon
	O Collins	A Prosser
	H Eaglestone	R Smith
	D Enright	
Officers:	Nicky Cayley	Democratic Services Officer
	Adam Clapton	Office Manager
Others:	3 members of the public.	

325 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for his absence was received from Cllr McMahon.

326 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Harvey declared an interest in the agenda item on tree planting as he was a member of the district council which supported the Wychwood Project.

327 **MINUTES**

Members received and considered the minutes of the meetings held on 27 July and 18 August 2020.

Matters Arising

27 July 2020

A member asked if there was any news on the rebranding and the Officer Manager replied that it had been put on hold until after the staffing review was completed.

18 August 2020

A member pointed out that Cllr Bolger had not been present at the meeting and therefore she should be removed from the vote and that the numbers of those voting should be adjusted.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held on 27 July and 18 August 2020 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair with the following amendment to minute 247 (18 August 2020):

Remove “Cllr Bolger - for” and change “15” to “14”.

328 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Mr Toby Swift from the Wychwood Project addressed the Council on a project to plant trees in the town and a request for financial support.

329 **TREE PLANTING REQUEST FROM THE WYCHWOOD PROJECT**

This item was moved up the agenda with the express permission of the Chair. Members were in favour of supporting the initiative to plant trees.

RESOLVED: that the Council would support the tree planting initiative from the Wychwood Project and would provide funding of £500 subject to the completion of a grant funding application by the Wychwood Project. The exact tree specimens and locations would be agreed with the Operations and Estates Officer.

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

Cllr David Harvey – West Oxfordshire District Council

Cllr Harvey informed the Council that the District Council had made great steps forward in terms of climate issues. He also updated members on the Garden Village plans. The District Council was also dealing with retro fitting homes in fuel poverty and supporting the local electricity bill.

Cllr Duncan Enright – West Oxfordshire District Council

Cllr Enright informed the Council that the WODC Cabinet Advisory Group on Covid recovery had been meeting – this covered environment, community, economy and council finances.

Cllr Owen Collins – West Oxfordshire District Council

Cllr Collins gave an update on the Environment Overview Scrutiny Committee which had met for the first time in a long time which had been presented with a proposal to abolish roadside bottle banks across the district but the Committee had not supported this.

RESOLVED: that the updates from the District Councillors be noted.

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

Cllr Ruth Smith

Cllr Smith reported that the Town Band was moving towards meeting and playing in person rather than virtually.

Cllr Liz Duncan

Cllr Duncan had been in regular contact with Witney and District Museum which whilst still shut, was using the time to do a lot of maintenance work. They were hoping to open in April 2021.

RESOLVED: that the updates from members be noted.

332 **MINUTES OF COMMITTEES AND SUB COMMITTEES**

a) **CLIMATE, BIODIVERSITY AND PLANNING COMMITTEE MINUTES - 11 AUGUST, 1 SEPTEMBER AND 22 SEPTEMBER 2020**

The Chair presented the minutes of the Climate, Biodiversity and Planning Committees held on 11 August, 1 September and 22 September 2020 and moved their acceptance.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Climate, Biodiversity and Planning Committee of 11 August, 1 September and 22 September 2020 be received and any recommendations therein approved.

b) **SPORT AND PLAY COMMITTEE MINUTES - 7 SEPTEMBER 2020**

The Chair presented the minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2020 and moved their acceptance.

Members asked for some amendments to the minutes of the meeting.

The Office Manager advised that the toilets at The Leys were now open again.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held on 7 September 2020 be received and any recommendation therein approved.

The Council also wished the following alteration to be made to these minutes:-

Minute SP262, (4) – addition of “fields such as” in front of King George V Field;

Confidential appendix – that a fire risk assessment and structural safety survey should be added to the list of requirements for West Witney Sports ground.

c) **HALLS, CEMETERIES AND ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE MINUTES - 14 SEPTEMBER 2020**

The Chair presented the minutes of the Halls, Cemeteries and Allotments Committee held on 14 September 2020, and moved their acceptance.

A member queried the green energy supply as the Council had already dealt with this. The Office Manager advised that in fact this item referred to the gas supply – previously members had dealt with the electricity supply.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 September 2020 be received and any recommendations therein approved.

d) STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE - 21 SEPTEMBER 2020

The Chair presented the minutes of the Stronger Communities Committee held on 21 September 2020 and moved their acceptance.

Members requested two changes to the minutes.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2020 be received and any recommendations therein approved.

Cllr Collins asked for the minute SC283 to be changed to reflect that he declared an interest as he also knew Punam Owens in a personal capacity and she ran Parkrun.

Cllr Gwatkin asked for minute SC289 to be changed to clarify that it was her “mother’s friend’s” house and that “other complaints had been made” be added after “light” as she did not want it to appear as though she was asking for preferential treatment.

e) POLICY, GOVERNANCE AND FINANCE COMMITTEE MINUTES - 28 SEPTEMBER 2020

The Chair presented the minutes of the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee held on 28 September 2020 and moved their acceptance.

Cllr Gwatkin who had offered to pay for the lighting in the Corn Exchange asked that the minutes be changed as she did not want her offer to be conditional on lighting up the building annually for Libfest.

The Office Manager asked members to decide on a lighting up period for Remembrance Day. After discussion members agreed on two 24-hour periods, from 8 – 9 November and 11 – 12 November. The Office Manager advised that having two lighting up periods for the same event may create issues with other people requesting this in the future. Members felt that as it was an extraordinary situation this year due to Covid they were confident there would not be any issues arising.

A member noted the item on budget parameters and cautioned the Council to not burden residents when setting next year’s budget as with increasing Covid restrictions people may find themselves in hard situations.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held on 28 September 2020 be received and any recommendations therein approved

Members requested that minute F318 (4) be changed to read:

That Cllr Gwatkin's offer to fund the purchase of the lights be accepted and that the Corn Exchange be lit up annually for Libfest.

333 **CIVIC ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Council received and considered the report of the Mayor's engagements, most of which had been virtual due to Covid-19.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted.

334 **HEALTH & SAFETY AND COVID-19 UPDATE**

The Office Manager presented a verbal update for members. West Witney Sports and Social Club had completed a fire risk assessment but there were outstanding items to be dealt with. Langdale Hall was due for its annual safety check which would take place next week. Covid-19 issues surrounding the offices and council workplaces were reviewed regularly.

A member asked if the Corn exchange Café could now be opened. The Leader explained that the furniture had been ordered and as soon as this arrived the café would open for takeaways and outside service.

Another member complained that the disabled parking outside Boots had been taken away. Another member replied that it had been replaced by spaces where the taxi rank was. The first member said that taxis were still parking there. He was advised to contact the Head of Paid Service at Publica.

The Town Council had been approached by the District Council to ask if it would pay for the planting and maintenance of planters at either end of the High Street road closures. The cost would be in the region of £2, 000. After some discussion, members supported this.

RESOLVED: that the verbal updates be noted and that the request from WODC to plant and maintain 6 planters to be used as road closure points (removing the unsightly red barriers currently in place at the top of Market Square and High Street) be agreed at a cost of around £2, 500 to be met from existing budget 4215/402.

335 **COMMUNICATION FROM THE LEADER**

The Leader noted how tough everything felt at the moment for officers and members and how even though many councillors worked full time, they were still able to, as volunteers, support their community.

336 **CORRESPONDENCE**

There was no correspondence.

337 **QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

A member asked the Leader when the staffing review would be presented. She replied that she believed that the first stage report would be available imminently and from this the Council would hopefully be able to budget for staffing costs when reviewed in November.

338 **SEALING OF DOCUMENTS**

There were no documents to be sealed.

339 **MOTION - LOCAL ELECTRICITY BILL**

Cllr Smith presented the following motion, supported by Cllr Ashbourne:-

That Witney Town Council

(i) notes that the Local Electricity Bill

- *aims to address the current situation, whereby the very large financial setup and running costs involved in selling locally generated renewable electricity to local customers result in it being impossible for local renewable electricity generators to do so,*
- *if made law, would make these financial costs proportionate to the scale of a renewable electricity supplier's operation and empower councils, together with their communities, to sell locally generated renewable electricity directly to local people, businesses and organisations, and*
- *would result in revenues received by councils or community organisations that chose to set up local renewable electricity companies, which could be used to help fund local greenhouse gas emissions reduction measures and to help improve local services and facilities;*

(ii) accordingly resolves to support the Local Electricity Bill, supported by a cross-party group of 187 MPs; and

(iii) further resolves to write to the local MP asking them to support the Bill in Parliament and to the organisers of the campaign for the Bill, Power for People, (at 8 Delancey Passage, Camden, London NW1 7NN or info@powerforpeople.org.uk) expressing its support.

RESOLVED: that the motion is adopted by Witney Town Council. Cllr Harvey abstained from the vote as he had already had discussions with the M.P for Witney.

The meeting closed at: 8.22 pm

Chair