

**STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE MEETING OF THE
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

Held on Monday, 25 January 2021

At 6.00 pm in the Virtual Meeting Room via Zoom

Present:

Councillor O Collins (Chair)

Councillors:	L Ashbourne J Aitman T Ashby	D Enright D Butterfield H Eaglestone
Officers:	Sharon Groth John Hickman Adam Clapton Polly Inness	Town Clerk Operations & Estates Officer Office Manager Communications & Events Officer
Others:	1 member of the public.	

SC33 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for her absence was received from Cllr Gwatkin.

SC34 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

SC35 MINUTES

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2020.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held on 16 November 2020 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

SC36 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Committee adjourned to receive public participation from Mr Eric Marshall who addressed members on thoughts for a collaborative community summer celebration in 2021 between the Town Council and the Music Festival.

Following his address, the Committee reconvened.

SC37 EVENTS REPORT

This item was moved up the agenda with the express permission of the Chair so that the member of the public present could hear the debate.

Members discussed the proposal for a summer celebration by Witney Music Festival and were generally in favour of the event. The Committee heard that the licensing of Market Square could be an issue, so it was suggested that the Music Festival contact the County and District Councils at the earliest opportunity before proceeding.

There was some concern on the estimated cost of the event and whether this could or should be covered, wholly or in part by the Town Council. There were other sources of funding which the organisers should explore and financial assistance from the Council should be referred for further debate to the Policy, Governance and Finance committee, on the receipt of a grant application form.

The Committee received an update on the Covid-19 Hero Awards and heard that 45 applications had been received. Some applications had been received with no contact details for the nominee, while some were for people with no link to Witney. A roll call of Witney Hero awardees would be published on social media and the website and this may help with missing contact details. Members also agreed that heroes must have been from Witney or been heroic in Witney; letters of thanks should be issued in these cases encouraging those nominating to contact the person's employer or local town or parish council.

An event to celebrate The NHS Social Care and Frontline Workers Day was proposed for 5 July 2021. National suggestions for the event had been received but there was some concern these appeared to be along the lines of Remembrance Day and therefore detached from the key workers the celebration was aimed at. A low-key event, possibly involving videos of local key workers was discussed, with agreement that the Town Council should light up the Corn Exchange and fly the associated flag on the day.

The Communications and Events Officer advised that there had been no further communication on the Carnival for 2021 since the last update, but she asked if members would like some sort of presence if it did go ahead. The Committee felt the Town Council should take part if Covid-19 restrictions were lifted enough for it to take place. There was currently no theme, but this was an issue that could be re-visited in coming months.

The Committee discussed the proposal for a "Zero Waste Roadshow". Members agreed to invite the Youth Council and local eco-friendly organisations and companies such as Waste 0 and Witney Community Fridge to have stands. A budget of £1,000 had previously been agreed for this event but the Climate Biodiversity and Planning Committee had subsequently agreed £600 expenditure on a thermal imaging device to rent out to residents to look at the efficiency of their homes, so £400 remained specifically for the roadshow event.

Members discussed Car Free Day in September and the requirement for road closures. Market Square and High Street were already closed to vehicles and any road closures would involve a cost to the Council. There was an expectation that the Covid road closures would still be in place. The roads were not currently closed to buses but if car free was to be encouraged then bus use should be encouraged so it would be preferable not to close the roads to buses.

RECOMMENDED: that the public participation and report be noted and:

1. that the Council is generally in favour of a Music Festival community event and supports it in principle;

2. that the organisers complete a grant funding application to be completed and submitted to the Council for consideration by the Policy & Governance Committee on 22 March 2021;
3. that the organisers be flexible on the date of the event due to the pandemic as the event must be safe for the public;
4. that the organisers speak to the District Council regarding licensing and capacity, market licensing, and any restrictions;
5. that the organisers feedback to Town Council the responses from the District Council;
6. that the organisers look at what specific items the Town Council could pay for/sponsor as opposed to making a general donation towards the event;
7. that regarding Witney Covid Heroes, applications are only considered for Witney residents and those wishing to nominate people outside the parish be advised to contact the relevant Parish Clerk or nominee's employer;
8. that the Council supports in principle the NHS Social Care and Frontline Workers Day on a small scale so as not to increase transmission of Covid-19 – this would include the lighting up of the Corn Exchange, a flag raising, and a piece on local radio. A video would be made of key workers;
9. that an NHS and Frontline Workers Flag be purchased at a cost of £139.41, the size to be determined by officers;
10. that if the Carnival goes ahead in 2021, the Council has a presence;
11. that a Zero Waste Roadshow be held on Zero Waste week (7 – 10 September 2021);
12. that a Car Free Day is held as per last year, but road closures not applied for subject to Covid-19 road closures still being in place;
13. that the Communications and Events Officer contacts the Windrush Bike Project and Cycling Without Age be invited to participate in car free day.

SC38 CORPORATE STRATEGIC PLAN

The Committee discussed the aims of the Council's Corporate Strategic Plan as discussed by the Task & Finish Group set up for this purpose.

Rebranding was discussed as only one logo design has been received. There was a capacity issue as it needed to be decided where the new logo will be placed e.g. website, vehicles, correspondence etc. This would be a larger project than originally envisaged.

RESOLVED: that the following proposals be approved and included in Corporate Strategic Plan:

- a) Rebranding;
- b) Christmas Lights Re-Tender, including fitting timers and more environmentally friendly solutions to meet the Council's Climate emergency objectives;

- c) Open Spaces Strategy, including the improvement to flora displays, roundabouts/in-bloom;
- d) Inclusion & Diversity Board.

SC39 **OPERATIONAL REPORT - PROGRESS ON IMPROVEMENTS AND REPAIRS SINCE THE LAST MEETING**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations and Estates Officer.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted and the tender to be put out for the Christmas Lights Contract to include two trees from Real Christmas Trees – for the duration of the contract.

SC40 **TREES UPDATE**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations and Estates Officer.

Recommendations had been received following a scheduled tree survey to fell two of the Council's trees and replace them with two new ones. The Operations & Estates Officer advised the committee that felling of trees was understandably never popular with residents so discussion could take place with the local Conservation Officer and Arboriculture Consultants, to see if severe reductions could be made to the trees which would enable them to be retained for now. Replanting of new trees could be done in Autumn 2021 with the aim to allow them to establish before any felling would need to be carried out on the older trees. Any new trees would be planted where they would not pose a future subsidence problem.

RESOLVED: That the report be noted and that the Local Conservation Officer be asked for an opinion on what works could be carried out to trees without the need for felling and also for advice on suitable replacement trees should felling be required.

SC41 **STREET FURNITURE AND INFRASTRUCTURE - PLANTERS ON HIGH STREET**

The Town Council had been approached by the District Council to fund the planting and maintenance of a further eight planters to assist with the covid related road closures in the High Street. Members accepted that the Town Council had expertise in planting across the town, but with its limited budgets felt that clarity was needed as to whether the District Council had been given money from the government to make High Streets Covid secure, and if so, why the Town Council was being asked to fund this project which would cost in the region on £3,500 per annum. If clarity was provided and a suitable budget could be found, the committee was in support of the request.

The Office Manager raised a street infrastructure issue concerning the provision on new litter and dog waste bins on the Windrush Place development in West Witney. Officers were discussing the issue with the District Council, the allocation of bins here not being the responsibility of the Town Council.

RECOMMENDED: that the report be noted and:-

1. that the Committee agrees in principle to fund the planting and maintenance of a further eight planters subject to clarification from the District Council on Covid 19 funding;

2. that the Town Council budget be checked to ensure that funds are available for the planters.

SC42 COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

The Committee received and considered the report of the Communications and Events Officer, concerning delivery of the newsletter and the content of the Annual satisfaction survey.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted and: -

1. that the quote from Push- Start to print and deliver the newsletter be accepted; in addition to the additional consultation questions regarding access at Tower Hill Cemetery
2. that for the Annual Residents Satisfaction Survey, there should not be a specific focus this year but more general questions should be asked, including topics such as the pandemic and what information residents found difficult to access.

SC43 COMMUNICATIONS IN AN EMERGENCY SITUATION

The Committee was asked by the Town Clerk to discuss communications in emergency situations in order to consider if the Council should have a policy document. The Communications Officers suggested a Community Resilience page on the website signposting the public to various agencies and services. Members discussed what it should cover - adverse weather, flooding / sandbags, pandemic, fire, accidents, medical needs such as power to equipment, map of defibrillator locations were suggestions. The Committee was advised that the District Council was preparing a response document on the recent flooding.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the Communications Officer creates a Community Resilience page on the Town Council's website to signpost residents to information and assistance in emergency situations;
2. that better relations are fostered between the Town and District Council in this respect;
3. that the Town Clerk drafts a policy document and emergency plan for presentation to a future Policy, Governance and Finance Committee for adoption;
4. that the Committee wishes to thank members past and present for their assistance during the Christmas flooding.

SC44 RURAL/MARKET TOWN GROUP

The Committee received and considered correspondence received from the Rural Market Town Group inviting the town to become a member. Members were unsure exactly what the benefits would be but were in favour of accepting the free trial period until the end of July 2021 and asking a member of the group to address them to explain the benefits further.

RESOLVED: that the correspondence from the Rural Market Town Group regarding membership be noted and: -

1. the free trial be accepted;
2. that the Rural Market Town Network be invited to attend a meeting to explain the benefits of joining the organisation.

The meeting closed at: 7.32 pm

Chair