

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

Held on Tuesday, 20 April 2021

At 6.00 pm in the Virtual Meeting Room via Zoom

Present:

Councillor R Smith (Chair)

Councillors:	A Prosser J Aitman V Gwatkin	M Jones L Duncan (In place of L Ashbourne)
Officers:	Adam Clapton Angus Whitburn Claire Green	Deputy Town Clerk Maintenance & Environmental Services Officer Administration Support - Planning & Stronger Communities
Others:	None.	

P204 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs L Ashbourne, R Bolger and A McMahon.

P205 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no interests declared by members at the meeting.

P206 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were no members of public present at the meeting.

P207 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The Committee received and considered a schedule of planning applications received from West Oxfordshire District Council.

RESOLVED:

That the comments, as per the attached schedule, be forwarded to West Oxfordshire District Council.

P208 LAND PURCHASE REQUEST - 25 VANNER ROAD

The Committee received and considered a resident request to purchase land at the rear of 25 Vanner Road, Witney.

The request was to purchase land which was a mix of grass/shrubland and hardstanding and while members were understanding of the request, similar requests had already been declined in other areas. The Council had declared a climate emergency and wanted to see any green areas maintained for their green, biodiverse and aesthetic value.

All amenity land was created for a purpose, be it those listed above or simply for recreational value and the Council had no obligation to sell them as disappointing as this may be to residents. It was agreed that any request to purchase amenity land under the Town Council's ownership in the future should be denied for these reasons.

RESOLVED:

1. That the request by a resident to purchase land at the rear of 25 Vanner Road be declined for the reasons listed above.

RECOMMENDED:

2. That Witney Town Council values all open spaces and amenity lands in its ownership across Witney. These areas, regardless of size or location contribute to the visible, recreational, and biodiverse landscape across the town. Grass areas in particular aid drainage and help mitigate against surface water flooding.

Therefore, the Town Council resolves to deny any requests from residents to purchase Town- Council land, to extend their household area in the future.

P209 **APPLICATION FOR PREMISES LICENCE - TTD20 LTD, 33 STANLEY COURT, RICHARD JONES ROAD, WITNEY**

The Committee received and considered an application for a Premises Licence at TTD20 Ltd, 33 Stanley Court, Richard Jones Road, Witney.

Members were concerned at the prospect of 24-hour alcohol delivery and were disappointed that the information provided did not provide clarity on what the applicants business model was.

RESOLVED:

That Witney Town Council is concerned about 24-hour local deliveries and would suggest a condition is added to the licence on timings.

P210 **APPLICATION FOR PREMISES LICENCE - USA FRIED CHICKEN**

With the express permission of the Chair, the Committee received an additional premises licence application for U.S.A Fried Chicken, Corn Street, Witney.

RESOLVED:

That Witney Town Council has no objections to this application.

P211 **PLANNING APPEAL NOTIFICATION APP/D3125/D/21/3268933 - 21 COGGES HILL ROAD, WITNEY**

The Committee received notification of Planning Appeal APP/D3125/D/21/13268933 concerning 21 Cogges Hill Road, Witney.

RESOLVED:

That Planning Appeal Notification be noted.

P212 **PAVEMENT LICENCE - THE FLEECE, CHURCH GREEN, WITNEY**

The Committee received a pavement licence consultation concerning The Fleece, Church Green, Witney.

It was noted that due to the statutory District Council consultation period, the licence had been granted. Members were concerned about the extension of the outdoor seating area in front of a neighbouring property and were hopeful that the neighbours views had been sought during the consultation.

RESOLVED:

That the pavement licence application for The Fleece, Church Green be noted.

a) **PAVEMENT LICENCE CONSULTATIONS**

The Committee were advised by the Deputy Town Clerk that the District Council's seven-day consultation for Pavement Licence applications did not fit with the Town Council's three-weekly cycle of meetings, and an alternative method of consulting members should be sought.

To ensure the Town Council's responses would be heard members agreed that these consultations should be circulated by electronic means and a response formulated by Officers, in conjunction with the Chair.

RESOLVED:

That future Pavement Licence Consultations from West Oxfordshire District Council be circulated to Committee members by email. An official Town Council response being formulated by Officers, in conjunction with the Chair.

P213 **CLIMATE & BIODIVERSITY UPDATE**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Maintenance & Environmental Services Officer, providing updates concerning the Lake & Country Park.

Members welcomed news that new signage, provided by the Lower Windrush Valley Project would be installed imminently and progress had been made on a vegetation survey of the Lake. The Committee agreed the recommendation from Facilitating Nature to use a grappling hook to help compile a species list of the vegetation.

There was further agreement on Rediscover Nature offering an additional activity to provide a temporary self-guided walk in the Country Park. Members were also made aware of a fairy door walk which had been created for children before Easter. Regrettably, the way these had been attached to trees could cause long-term harm; the creator had been asked to contact the Town Council in the hope officers could work with them in finding a more suitable way of running the activity.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report and verbal update by the Maintenance & Environmental Services Officer be noted; and,
2. That the aquatics survey offer from Facilitating Nature for the South section of the Lake be agreed; and,
3. That Rediscover Nature be allowed to use the Lake & Country Park for self-guided walks on a temporary basis.

P214 CAR-FREE DAY 2021

The Committee received and considered the report of the Communications and Community Engagement Officer regarding Car Free Day 2021.

The Council's Stronger Communities Committee had already agreed this event, but as the Committee most concerned with active travel, suggestions on what the event should comprise of were being sought.

Members noted that Car Free Day fell on a school day and it would be difficult to encourage parents not to use cars during the morning school run, the event could include activities for children at the end of the school day. These could include chalk pavement selfies as suggested by officers and others from external providers.

The Windrush Bike Project may be able to offer guided cycle rides from and to Market Square and the 1863 bar at the Corn Exchange and other businesses might want to be involved. Safe cycle routes to and from school could also be added to the Council's mobile phone App and promoted.

RESOLVED:

1. That the report be noted; and
2. That as Car Free Day 2021 falls on a school day, that all activities aimed at children be scheduled for 14.00 – 17.00pm as they are leaving school; and,
3. That the activities planned during the day could include cycle tours (routes to and from schools), guided cycle rides and chalk activities; and,
4. That the Town Council takes the opportunity to promote no motor idling in Witney Town Centre and the Market Square.

P215 20'S PLENTY FOR OXFORDSHIRE

The Committee received a verbal update on the 20's Plenty for Oxfordshire campaign from the Chair, Cllr Smith and Cllr Duncan.

The proposed outcome of the campaign was to introduce a blanket 20mph speed limit across Oxfordshire on roads largely shared by cycles and cars – it would result in safer travel but also reduce emissions and improve air quality. So far introduction of 20mph limits had been piecemeal across towns and villages and had been mainly funded by parish and town Councils. Oxfordshire County Council, constrained by budgets had only offered limited support so far and might pay for some scoping and set up fees, but the majority of funds would need to be borne by the Town Council.

It was suggested the Town Council should write to the County Council, offering its support to the campaign and asking for consideration of 20mph limits included in the new east to west active travel corridor to be expanded.

Members agreed that information on costs for implementing a blanket 20mph scheme and details on speeding would be beneficial in progressing this issue if officers could source this information, any external assistance should also be utilised.

RESOLVED:

1. That Witney Town Council supports the 20's Plenty for Oxfordshire Campaign to reduce the speed limit to 20mph across Witney and Oxfordshire; and,
2. Writes to Oxfordshire County Council as the Highways Authority in May 2020 to advise of its support and to ask that monitoring and review takes place on the 20mph schemes incorporated as part of the East to West Active Travel Corridor, adding further comments that additional areas should have been included in this scheme.

P216 NO MOW MAY

The Committee discussed the merits of supporting Plantlife's 'No Mow May' Campaign to promote wildflower planting and sustain biodiversity.

Members agreed that the Town Council should support the campaign through its Social Media outlets, protecting and enhancing biodiversity was a key aim of the Committee and the Council. There was hope that further action could be taken this summer and planned for future years.

Officers advised that many of the town's verges were under the remit of the County Council and a wildflower planting project in those areas appeared to have stalled. However, the Town Council's Grounds contractors had identified several grass banks which were difficult to cut and were prepared to plant these wildflowers. Members agreed this would be advantageous and timely in terms of promoting this campaign, officers advising signs could be placed to further promote No Mow May.

The Committee went further and asked if a further category in the Britain in Bloom could be entered with these wild editions. A new competition, 'Wild Witney' was recommended to encourage residents to leave areas of their lawns/gardens uncut to promote wildflowers and resurgence of insect and bee populations. A prize could be given for the best wild area along the lines of previous Christmas lights competitions.

RESOLVED:

1. That Witney Town Council supports and promotes Plantlife's 'No Mow May' campaign through its Social Media Outlets; and,
2. That Witney Town Council does not mow the following areas of grassland throughout May and the summer, with the Grounds Contractors sowing wildflower seeds in these areas: Quarry Road, Thorney Leys, Manor Road and Tower Hill Cemetery; and,
3. That signs are displayed in these areas to highlight the 'No Mow May Campaign'; and,
4. That further wildflower planting is considered as part of the Town Council's Open Spaces Strategy.

RECOMMENDED:

5. That Witney Town Council further promotes wildflower planting by creating a 'Wild Witney' competition for Witney residents. This would be for households to leave an area in the garden for wildflower planting; and,
6. That officers research the possibility of entering further categories of the Britain in Bloom competition, covering wildflower planting.

P217 **WALK TO SCHOOL WEEK**

The Committee were advised of the Living Streets, Walk to School Week campaign, 17 – 21 May 2021.

The Town Council was an enthusiastic supporter of active travel and members agreed that the scheme should be promoted on the Town Council's media outlets to make residents aware of it.

RESOLVED:

That Witney Town Council supports Walk to School Week in May 2021 by promotion through its Social Media outlets.

a) **SCHOOL STREETS**

The Committee received a briefing note from Oxfordshire County Council concerning Phase 1b of the School Streets Initiative.

Members were pleased to see that proposals included School Streets for Henry Box and Tower Hill Schools and looked forward to them developing in the coming months.

RESOLVED:

That the briefing note received from Oxfordshire County Council concerning phase 1b of the School Streets Project be noted.

P218 **WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL - CLIMATE ACTION UPDATE**

The Committee was advised that West Oxfordshire District Council had issued a Climate Bulletin which contained latest news and promoted climate initiatives.

Members were encouraged to sign up to this e-bulletin through the Council's website and think about how and where the Town Council could work more with the District Council in bringing about changes in the town.

RESOLVED:

1. That the Climate bulletin outlining West Oxfordshire District Council's climate initiatives be noted; and,
2. That members sign up to receive the bulletin and think about how the Town Council could work more collaboratively to achieve aims of both authorities.

The meeting closed at: 7.44 pm

Chair