

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

**Held on Monday, 19 July 2021**

**At 6.00 pm in the Virtual Meeting Room via Zoom**

**Present:**

Councillor O Collins (Chair)

Councillors:	D Butterfield H Eaglestone	V Gwatkin A Prosser
Officers:	Adam Clapton Claire Green  Sharon Groth Simon Wright	Deputy Town Clerk Administration Support - Planning & Stronger Communities Town Clerk Democratic & Legal Services Officer
Others:	0 members of the public.	

As there was no legislation in place for the Town Council to hold virtual meetings, and because of the ongoing Covid-19 Pandemic, the Stronger Communities Committee formed virtually as an Advisory Committee. Any recommendations outside of the current work's programme, budget or policy would require ratification at the Full Council meeting held on 2 August 2021.

**SC367 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence was received from Councillors Luci Ashbourne. Joy Aitman and Rosa Bolger

**SC368 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest from members or officers at this juncture.

**SC369 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 7 June 2021 were received.

An update was sought in respect of 'Car Free Day' and in response it was confirmed that officers were looking at participating in the campaign and would advise members of progress.

**Resolved:**

That the minutes of the meeting of the Stronger Communities Committee held on 7 June 2021 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

SC370 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

SC371 **COMMITTEE WORK PLAN**

The Committee received details of the priorities arising from the recently adopted Open Spaces Strategy that fall within the remit of the Stronger Communities Committee.

**Resolved:**

That, the priorities be noted.

SC372 **CHRISTMAS LIGHTS DISPLAY TENDER & SWITCH ON**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations & Estates Advisor regarding the Christmas Lights Tender and switch-on.

Clarification was given regarding the additional lighting proposed and confirmation was given that, if approved, the lights would exceed the proposed budget by £755. It was noted that the running costs for the lights would be billed separately. There was support for the proposal but the committee requested that the energy usage be carefully monitored to allow the carbon footprint to be measured.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the alterations to the suggested displays on Church Green and The Buttercross be approved;
2. That, the operational times for the lights be at the following times 06:00 – 09:00 and 15:30 – 23:00;
3. That, the additional budget for the lights be approved; and
4. That, the Christmas Lights switch on be held on Friday 26th November with switch on at 18:00 with the Rotary Club organising the event as in previous years, subject to any Covid-19 measures in place nearer the time.

SC373 **ADVENT FAYRE**

Consideration was given to the report of the Venues & Events Officer updating on the annual Advent Fayre hosted by the Town Council.

**Recommended:**

That, an Advent Fayre be held at the end of November/beginning of December based on the previous formats.

SC374 **CHURCH GREEN – MEMORIAL BENCH REQUEST**

At this juncture the members of the Committee declared a personal non-prejudicial interest by virtue of the applicant being a Witney Town Councillor. The interest did not preclude members from participating in discussion or voting on the matter.

Consideration was given to the report of the Project Officer regarding a request to install a memorial bench on Church Green.

The Committee noted that the bench was of standard design and there was space available on Church Green, and therefore it would not conflict any recommendation from a memorial bench policy being prepared by Officers.

**Recommended:**

That, agreement be given to the siting and installation of the memorial bench as detailed in the report.

SC375 **BUS STOP - TOWER HILL**

The Committee received the report of the Project Officer regarding the use of Section 106 monies for the installation of a new bus shelter on Tower Hill.

The Committee noted the concerns of residents and the need for the design to address those issues if possible. It was noted that the developer contribution was specific to bus stop provision.

During discussion it was agreed that Option 4 would be the preferred style of bus stop and this design should form the basis of discussions with local residents about the scheme.

**Recommended:**

1. That, Option 4 be supported as the design for the new bus stop on Tower Hill;
2. That, a conversation be held with residents in the wider vicinity of the shelter with Councillors Collins and Smith visiting those houses immediately behind the site in person;
3. That, the provision of a litter bin at the site be approved

SC376 **BUS SHELTER ADVERTISEMENT REQUEST**

The Committee received a request from West Oxfordshire District Council seeking permission to advertise an App on bus stops in the town.

It was advised that the LoyalFree app was supporting local businesses by enabling them to list offers or discounts on the deals section of the app for free and encourage residents and visitors back to high streets after national lockdowns.

Members expressed support for the proposal but subject to the District Council meeting the costs and the design, specification and locations being agreed with the Town Council. It was further agreed that the advertising should be for an initial six-month period.

**Recommended:**

That, the request from West Oxfordshire District Council be supported for a period of six months subject to the District Council meeting the costs and the design, specification and locations being agreed with the Town Council.

**SC377 COMMUNICATIONS & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT UPDATE REPORT**

The Committee received an update report from the Communications and Community Engagement Officer updating on a number of issues.

Members gave support to a request for additional software that would help make the Council's output more professional.

In respect of planting for 2022 it was agreed that the Queen's Platinum Jubilee should be the theme. It was agreed that pastel colours such as those that the Queen is frequently dressed in or which represent plants from Royal Estates, for example pale lilacs, lime greens and yellows along with some silver plants to represent platinum should be used. Where possible, flowers should be insect friendly.

It was noted that the issue of roundabout planting referenced in the report would be picked up as part of the Open spaces Strategy. Members further expressed support for the 'Love Your Parks' campaign.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the procurement of additional IT communications software be approved;
2. That, the concept of a planting scheme for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee be supported with pastel coloured and silver plants being used and a more detailed planting scheme being presented at a future Stronger Communities Committee; and
3. That, Witney Town Council supports 'Love Your Parks' week which runs 26 July – 1 August

**SC378 COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY**

The Committee received and considered a draft Communications Strategy prepared by the Communications & Community Engagement Officer. Members were reminded that this was a live document and would be subject to regular review.

**Recommended:**

That, the Communications Strategy be adopted, subject to Full Council approval.

**SC379 YOUTH SERVICES GRANT AWARD 2021**

Consideration was given to the report of the Deputy Town Clerk seeking approval for the scheme to run as it had in the previous year, under the same criteria and timeframe, opening for applications on 1st August 2021.

Members expressed their support for the continuation of the scheme and requested that due to the uncertainty that organisations were still experiencing that some degree of flexibility be possible if priorities changed.

**Recommended:**

1. That, Opening the Youth Services Grant Award scheme under the same criteria as the previous year on 1st August 2021 be approved; and

2. That, delegation be given to officers to agree a condition regarding the use of funds if the original purpose cannot be achieved due to Covid-19 related issues

**SC380 WITNEY COVID-19 HERO AWARDS & COMMEMORATION**

The Committee received the report of the Deputy Town Clerk updating on commemorations for those who had lost their lives to Covid-19 and for volunteers who had served the community.

It was noted that discussions with the Rotary Club had continued but no agreement on a joint project had been reached. It was indicated that various sites and types of memorial had been explored and the committee needed to make a decision as to whether they wished to continue a joint approach or commission its own memorial. Discussion ensued around the type of memorial that would be appropriate and examples were shown to the committee. It was noted that the Town Council had control of a small area of land on Church Green which may be suitable for a memorial-type garden.

After detailed discussion it was agreed that the Council would pursue its own memorial with a dual purpose of commemorating those that had died during the pandemic and also recognising the work of volunteers.

It was agreed that the detailed design and siting should be referred to task and finish group to finalise the proposal.

**Recommended:**

1. That, Witney Town Council commissions its own dual memorial to commemorate those that had died during the pandemic and also recognising the work of volunteers;
2. That, Witney Town Council continues discussion with the Rotary Club of Witney on a memorial on its land, where possible; and
3. That, a task and finish group be constituted to undertake the development of the project.

**SC381 WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL - TEA DANCE**

Consideration was given to the report of the Venue & Events Officer regarding the reintroduction of a weekly tea dance in the Corn Exchange.

Members expressed their support for the events and considered that a small increase in the ticket price to £2.50 to cover costs was appropriate.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the reintroduction of the weekly tea dance/community event in the Corn Exchange be approved: and
2. That, the ticket price for the events be set at £2.50.

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The meeting closed at: 7.38 pm

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Chair