

**ANNUAL COUNCIL MEETING OF
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

Held on Tuesday, 4 May 2021

At 7.00 pm in the Virtual Meeting Room via Zoom

Present:

Councillor J Aitman (Chair)

Councillors:	L Ashbourne T Ashby R Bolger D Butterfield O Collins L Duncan H Eaglestone	V Gwatkin M Jones J King A McMahon A Prosser R Smith
Officers:	Sharon Groth Adam Clapton Simon Wright	Town Clerk Deputy Town Clerk Democratic & Legal Services Officer
Others:	3 members of the public.	

219 ELECTION OF TOWN MAYOR 2021/22

The retiring Mayor, Cllr Aitman invited nominations for the position of Town Mayor for the ensuing municipal year. Cllr Aitman was nominated and was duly elected Mayor by the Council.

RESOLVED:

that Cllr Joy Aitman be elected Town Mayor for the ensuing municipal year.

The Town Clerk advised that the Declaration of Acceptance of Office would be signed following the meeting.

220 ELECTION OF DEPUTY MAYOR 2021/22

Cllr Aitman invited nominations for the position of Deputy Mayor for the ensuing municipal year. Cllr Duncan was nominated and elected by the Council.

RESOLVED:

that Cllr Liz Duncan be elected Deputy Town Mayor for the ensuing municipal year.

The Town Clerk advised that the Declaration of Acceptance of Office would be signed following the meeting.

221 **ELECTION OF LEADER OF THE COUNCIL 2021/22**

The Chair invited nominations for the position of Leader of the Town Council. Cllr.Ashbourne was nominated and elected by the Council.

RESOLVED:

that Cllr Luci Ashbourne be elected as the Leader of the Town Council for the ensuing municipal year.

222 **ELECTION OF DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL 2021/22**

The Chair invited nominations for the Deputy Leader of the Council. Cllr Gwatkin was nominated and duly elected as Deputy Leader by the Council.

RESOLVED:

that Cllr Vicky Gwatkin be elected as Deputy Leader of the Council for the ensuing municipal year.

223 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. David Harvey and Dean Temple.

224 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

225 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 12 April 2021 were received and considered.

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Council meeting held on 12 April 2021 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

226 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

227 **FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE COUNCIL**

The Council received and considered the report of the Town Clerk outlining options for Council meetings as a consequence of the recent court decision that confirmed the cessation of 'virtual' meetings.

The Town Clerk highlighted that decision would be needed on the Open Space Strategy in due course and sought delegation to extend the current grounds contract for a further year to allow a decision to be made and options to be fully considered. In response to a query regarding timescales it was clarified that the strategy had just been received and it would be made available to members at the earliest opportunity ahead of the June Council meeting.

It was proposed and seconded that Option B in the report which recommended changing the current standing committees to advisory meetings that would then make recommendations to Council at the 28 June meeting. It was noted that this would allow virtual meetings to continue and delegations to the Town Clerk would facilitate urgent decisions if needed.

The timetable of meetings for 2021/2022 were proposed and seconded.

On being put to the vote the propositions were carried.

Resolved:

1. That, Committees of the Town Council become 'Advisory' Committees, still meet virtually per the scheduled calendar of meetings, and make Recommendations (not Resolutions) to full Council which will be ratified at the physical Council meeting scheduled for 28th June (if restrictions allow);
2. That, urgent decisions, could be enacted, under the delegations to the Town Clerk, if necessary;
3. That the timetable of meetings for 2021/2022 be agreed; and
4. Delegation be given to the Town Clerk to extend the current grounds contract for one year to allow the new Open Spaces Strategy to be considered.

228 **APPOINTMENT OF ANY NEW COMMITTEES IN ACCORDANCE WITH STANDING ORDER 30**

Cllr. Gwatkin, as Chair of the Sport & Play Committee, proposed that the committee be retitled Parks & Recreation Committee as this better reflected their remit. The proposal was seconded.

Council noted that the Stronger Communities Committee resolved on 15 March 2021 [Minute no SC139 refers] to appoint a Task & Finish Group for the Queens Platinum Jubilee celebrations in 2022.

Resolved:

That, the Sport & Play Committee be renamed Parks & Recreation Committee.

229 **REVIEW [OR REQUEST THE TOWN CLERK TO REVIEW] ANY OF THE TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR COMMITTEES**

There were no changes to the current Terms of Reference for Committees.

230 **APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO STANDING COMMITTEES, SUB-COMMITTEES AND WORKING PARTIES, AND THE ELECTION OF CHAIRS**

Members considered the appointment of standing committees, sub committees and working parties and proposed the following:

Climate, Biodiversity & Planning Committee

Cllr J Aitman
Cllr V Gwatkin
Cllr A Prosser

Cllr O Collins
Cllr M Jones
Cllr R Smith

Cllr L Duncan
Cllr A McMahon

Chair of Committee Cllr R Smith

Parks and Recreation Committee

Cllr T Ashby	Cllr J Aitman	Cllr L Ashbourne
Cllr D Butterfield	Cllr L Duncan	Cllr D Enright
Cllr V Gwatkin	Cllr A McMahon	

Chair of Committee Cllr V Gwatkin

Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee

Cllr T Ashby	Cllr J Aitman	Cllr L Ashbourne
Cllr O Collins	Cllr L Duncan	Cllr V Gwatkin
Cllr M Jones	Cllr R Smith	

Chair of Committee Cllr M Jones

Stronger Communities Committee

Cllr J Aitman	Cllr L Ashbourne	Cllr R Bolger
Cllr D Butterfield	Cllr O Collins	Cllr H Eaglestone
Cllr V Gwatkin	Cllr A Prosser	

Chair of Committee Cllr O Collins

Policy, Governance & Finance Committee

Cllr J Aitman	Cllr L Ashbourne	Cllr O Collins
Cllr H Eaglestone	Cllr V Gwatkin	Cllr D Harvey
Cllr M Jones	Cllr R Smith	

Chair of Committee Cllr L Ashbourne

Personnel Sub-Committee

Cllr J Aitman	Cllr L Ashbourne	Cllr O Collins
Cllr V Gwatkin	Cllr M Jones	Cllr R Smith

Chair of Sub-Committee Cllr L Ashbourne

Corn Exchange Working Party

Cllr J Aitman	Cllr L Ashbourne	Cllr O Collins
Cllr L Duncan	Cllr D Harvey	Cllr J King

Chair of Working Party Cllr O Collins

Platinum Jubilee Working Party

Cllr. J Aitman	Cllr D Enright	Cllr M Jones
Cllr O Collins	Cllr H Eaglestone	Cllr D Harvey

RESOLVED:

That the membership of the standing committees, sub committees and working parties and their Chairs be agreed as detailed above.

231 **APPOINTMENT TO ADVISORY COMMITTEES AND EXTERNAL BODIES/OUTSIDE ORGANISATIONS**

The Chair sought nominations for vacancies on three outside organisations all for a four-year term of office.

Resolved:

That the following appointments be made:

1. Witney Town Hall Charity – Cllr. Harry Eaglestone to June 2025
2. Witney Educational Foundation – Cllr. Liz Duncan to May 2025
3. Witney Town Charity – Cllr. Joy Aitman to June 2025

232 **WINDRUSH VALLEY TRAFFIC ACTION GROUP**

Consideration was given to a document from Witney Valley Traffic Action Group (WIVTAG) seeking support for their campaign regarding the impact on surrounding communities of the Burford Bridge 7.5t Experimental Traffic Regulation Order (TRO). It was noted that a presentation from WIVTAG had been received at the Traffic Advisory Committee.

During discussion Councillors acknowledged the impact on some of the parishes close to Burford of HGV movements. Members indicated they supported the aims of the group 'in principle. However in respect of Witney it was considered that it may be premature to offer support at this stage until data was available from Oxfordshire County Council on the impact of the TRO on HGV traffic in Witney.

Resolved:

That, Witney Town Council, whilst supporting the wider aims of the group, does not commit support at this stage until data on the trial traffic order has been considered and the impact, if any, on Witney has been established.

233 **AMENITY LAND SALE POLICY**

The recommendation of the Climate, Biodiversity and Planning Committee regarding the introduction of a policy that would deny any requests from residents to purchase Town Council land to extend their household area.

Members supported the introduction of the policy and indicated that it would meet the Council's aim in respect of Climate Change and protecting the environment as areas of green space were important for biodiversity. It was also considered that the policy would provide clarity about the issue.

Resolved:

1. 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.
2. Therefore, the Town Council resolves to deny any requests from residents to purchase Town Council land, to extend their household area.

234 **BANKING ARRANGEMENTS**

The recommendation of the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee (Minute F155/PGF) from the meeting held on 22 March 2021 was received and considered.

Resolved:

1. that having formed the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee the Council agrees the Members be designated as authorised cheque signatories on the Council's banking mandates (currently Barclays Bank and CCLA). For the purposes of the minutes these are named as: Cllrs Luci Ashbourne, Joy Aitman, Owen Collins, Harry Eaglestone, Vicky Gwatkin, Anthony (David) Harvey, Mel Jones, and Ruth Smith.
2. that if necessary two Members be named from the above resolution be appointed to act on behalf of the Council in the absence of the Town Clerk/CEO should the need arise;
3. that the Town Clerk/CEO, Mrs Sharon Groth, be listed on all the Council's bank mandates – particularly the Barclays Bank General and Business Premium Account and able to deal with transfers between accounts as well as setting up direct debits; and
4. that having revised the Council's Financial Regulations and adopted at the Council meeting held on 12 April 2021, that the implementation of on-line banking with the Council's current banking provider, Barclays Bank Plc, be agreed.

235 **NALC - LOCAL COUNCIL AWARD SCHEME**

The report of the Deputy Town Clerk seeking approval for the Town Council to apply for the NALC Local Council Award Scheme was received and considered.

Councillors expressed their support for applying and considered it would be beneficial for the Council.

Resolved:

1. that the report is noted;
2. that the Town Council resolves that it has the necessary documents, policies and procedures as set out above and publishes them online where appropriate in order to apply for an award; and
3. that the status is reviewed annually to confirm eligibility

236 **COUNCILLOR ATTENDANCE REGISTER 2020/21**

A report showing Councillor attendance at meetings in 2020/2021 was received.

Resolved:

That, the Councillor Attendance Register 2020/2021 be noted.

237 **EXCLUSION OF PRESS & PUBLIC**

RESOLVED:

that in accordance with section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, and as extended by Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public, including the press, be excluded from the meeting because of the confidential nature of the following business to be transacted.

238 **STAFFING MATTERS**

The confidential minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee meeting were received.

Resolved:

That, the confidential minutes of the Personnel Sub-Committee held on 26 April 2021, and the recommendations contained therein, be approved.

The meeting closed at: 7.43 pm

Chair