

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

Held on Monday, 20 September 2021

At 6.00 pm in the Main Hall, The Corn Exchange, Witney

Present:

Councillor O Collins (Chair)

Councillors:	J Aitman D Butterfield	V Gwatkin A Prosser
Officers:	Adam Clapton Sharon Groth Simon Wright	Deputy Town Clerk Town Clerk Democratic & Legal Services Officer
Others:	5 members of the public. Councillor Ruth Smith	

SC471 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors L Ashbourne, R Bolger and H Eaglestone.

SC472 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor O Collins declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in Agenda Item No. 9 – Youth Services Grants 2021 by virtue of knowing one of the applicants.

Councillor J Aitman declared a personal non-prejudicial interest in Agenda Item No 9 – Youth Services Grants 2021 by virtue of two of the applicants being the Mayor’s charities for the current year.

SC473 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2021 were adopted and signed as a correct record by the Chair.

There were no matters arising.

SC474 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Committee adjourned for this item.

Julie Edwards & Marion Harley representing Got2B, Jon Berry from Oxon Music & Arts Trust and Kelly Gough & Barry Ingleton of Synolos addressed the committee in respect of Agenda Item No. 9 – Youth Services Grants.

The Committee reconvened following public participation.

SC475 **COMMITTEE WORK PLAN**

The committee considered the report of the Town Clerk providing an update to Members on the Committee's work plan. The report also sought consideration of any future/additional projects to be put forward for the budget setting cycle.

Clarification was given that the defibrillators on council land were regularly inspected and maintained. It was further reported that the provision of a new defibrillator at Ducklington Lake was being progressed. Members were advised that agreement for the siting of a cycle repair stand near the Town Hall had been received from Oxfordshire County Council.

The committee were notified that permission from the Diocese of Oxford to undertake works to the pillbox on Langel Common had been received and an application could be made to Historic England for works to be carried out. However, there was no budget and the structure wasn't in very good repair. During discussion it was suggested that any planting scheme would need to be carefully managed to avoid further damage to the structure. It was also considered that some sort of information plaque/barcode highlighting the structure could be put in place. Members favoured the second option.

It was agreed that the matter be discussed with Historic England and a project progressed from there based on the outcomes.

In respect of budget items, it was clarified that the Platinum Jubilee Working Party would establish proposed expenditure at its first meeting. A suggestion of providing books about sustainability to local schools was made and it was agreed that details would be provided to the Town Clerk for consideration.

Resolved:

1. That, options for the WW11 Pill Box Project be progressed with Historic England and delegated to the Town Clerk to approve; and
2. That, the provision of books on sustainability be considered as part of the budget setting process.

SC476 **SALT BINS**

Members considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk seeking requests for new salt bins in Witney. It was clarified that nay new bin would cost the Town council £250 and these would be filled once by Oxfordshire County Council with any topping up being done by the Town Council. It was noted that a budget of £1000 was allocated for the bins.

Members noted that the bins were provided for roads. It was suggested that a bin on Dark Lane would be beneficial, and this was agreed. The provision of bins along the path connecting Madley Park and Oxford Hill were highlighted as a possible site. It was suggested and agreed that Oxfordshire County Council be approached about providing these bins as part of the Active Travel route. If this was not possible then the remaining budget could be used to facilitate this.

Resolved:

1. That, a request for the provision of a new salt bin in Dark Lane be supported; and
2. That, Oxfordshire County Council be requested to provide three salt bins on the path linking Madley Park with Oxford Hill as part of the Active travel scheme; and
3. That, if the request above is not supported the remaining Town Council budget be used to provide the bins.

SC477 TOWER HILL BUS STOP IMPROVEMENTS

The Chair gave an update on discussions that he and Councillor Smith had held with local residents regarding the provision of a new bus shelter on Tower Hill. The committee was advised that there was opposition to the proposal from some local residents.

The committee was requested to consider how to progress the bus stop improvements as part of the developer funding package. It was noted that the Town Council could continue with providing a shelter, not progressing the project and leaving Oxfordshire County Council to consider the matter or providing a bench only with no shelter.

During discussion the committee considered the financial implications, lack of detailed passenger usage figures, restrictions on the usage of developer funding and the objections of local residents.

Members considered the various options and on being put to the vote it was agreed that the Town Council should continue with the bus shelter project with a sedum roof bus shelter subject to further discussions with Oxfordshire County Council.

Resolved:

That, Witney Town council continues with the bus shelter project on Tower Hill subject to further discussions between Oxfordshire County council and input from local residents on the agreed scheme.

SC478 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT 2022

The Committee considered the report of the Communications and Community Engagement Officer regarding events, additional to the regular calendar, that the council may wish to support in 2022.

Members considered the list, and it was suggested and agreed that World Environment Day should be removed as it was not as specific or targeted as some of the other environmental days. In addition, it was agreed to remove Screen Free Week. It was further advised that a volunteering event was also proposed in conjunction with Volunteer Link Up.

In considering the financial implications it was resolved to request an increase in the budget to £3000 to cover costs.

Resolved:

1. That, the list of additional events for 2022, as amended, be approved; and
2. That, Council be recommended to approve an increase in the events budget to £3000 for 2022.

SC479 **YOUTH SERVICES GRANT 2021**

The Committee considered five applications for funding from the Youth Services Grants together with the submissions that had been made under public participation. The committee noted that the grant totals requested totalled £52,000 which exceeded the £30,000 that was allocated. It was noted that any decisions would be recommendations to the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee.

Clarification was sought regarding the unused grant for the Witney Music Festival. It was advised that a recommendation on use of that funding could be made to Policy, Governance & Finance Committee who would consider grants at its forthcoming meeting.

During discussion it was agreed that all the applicants were worthy causes that supported young people in the town. It was considered that the application from Buttercross Theatre was for scholarships so would only benefit individuals rather than the community. It was agreed that their application could be considered under the discretionary grant scheme and via Witney Educational Foundation.

Members considered options for distributing the budget between the remaining four organisations including giving a percentage of the requested amounts to each. The criteria for the grants was outlined and options for transferring budgets was discussed.

It was agreed that a request for the unused £9,750 previously allocated to Witney Music Festival to be added to the Youth Grants Fund be made making a total allocation of £39,750. In respect of the applications, it was agreed that the grant fund be split on an equitable percentage basis between the applicants.

Recommended:

1. That, the application by Buttercross Theatre Group be referred to the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee for consideration under the discretionary grant scheme;
2. That, Policy, Governance & Finance Committee consider the reallocation of the £9,750 previously awarded to Witney Music Festival to the Youth Grants Awards; and
3. That, the youth Grants budget be allocated to Got2Be, Home Start Oxford, Oxfordshire Music & Arts Trust and Synolos on an equitable percentage basis.

SC480 **CITIZEN OF THE YEAR AWARD 2021**

Consideration was given to the report of the Communications and Community Engagement Officer requesting whether to reinstate the awards. It was noted that last year the Council ran the Covid-19 Witney Hero awards as an alternative.

Members expressed their support for the awards but acknowledged that nominations had been fairly low in 2019. It was agreed that promotion of the awards was essential and clarification was given that organisations could also be nominated. It was suggested that the scheme should be reviewed in due course to ascertain its success.

Resolved:

1. That, the Citizen of the Year Award for 2021 be supported on the basis outlined in the report; and
2. That, the awards be presented at a Civic Reception to be held in early 2022; and
3. That, the award scheme be reviewed after this year.

SC481 **REMEMBRANCE 2021**

The report of the Venue & Events Officer updating on arrangements for Remembrance Day was received and considered.

Member expressed support for the proposed arrangements and noted that the event would be different to most years with limited marching and wreath laying. Officers advised there were some still details to be confirmed.

Resolved:

That, the arrangements for Remembrance Day be noted.

SC482 **CHRISTMAS LIGHTS SWITCH ON**

The Town Clerk advised members of the arrangements for the Christmas lights switch on which was organised by the Rotary Club and grant aided by the council.

It was reported that an approach had been made by the Rotary Club for the Town Council to accept liability for the event as there were concerns about reputational risk if a Covid outbreak was linked to it. Clarification was given that there were no financial implications. Members considered that as organisers of the event the Rotary Club should accept liability.

Resolved:

That, the request from the Rotary Club for the Town council to take liability for the Christmas lights switch on be refused.

The meeting closed at: 8.00 pm

Chair