

## **STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE**

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**Date:** Monday, 15 November 2021

**Title:** Public Benches – West Oxfordshire District Council Requests

**Contact Officer:** Deputy Town Clerk – Adam Clapton

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### **Purpose of the Report**

To resolve whether to accept ownership and ongoing maintenance for public benches being proposed by West Oxfordshire District Council.

### **Background**

Town and Parish Council's have the power to provide public benches under the Parish Council's Act 1957 s1.

### **Current Situation**

The proposal from West Oxfordshire District Council is to install up to four benches in Bridge Street, High Street and Market Square to encourage shoppers to the town centre and make it a more welcoming place (attached as appendices to this report).

The Town Council's Customer Satisfaction survey in 2017 focused on benches and found that residents were desirous of new benches being installed in town centre areas.

### **Open Spaces Strategy**

If accepted, the proposal would help towards discharging Open Spaces Strategy action plan references **IS5** (Improving and Investing in our Infra-Structure Provision) and **EE2** (Working in the most Effective & Efficient Manner).

### **Environmental impact**

The installation of additional benches in the town centre helps to promote and facilitate active travel in Witney for all ages.

### **Risk**

In decision making Councillors should consider any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

Members may like to consider whether these requests meet the proposed Memorial Bench Policy criteria, also being considered by this Committee to provide a consistent approach in the future.

### **Financial implications**

- If agreed, the proposal would increase the number of public benches at no additional capital cost to Witney Town Council. The benches are being funded from the District Council's 'Welcome Back Fund'
- The Council would be subject to ongoing maintenance costs, including repair and staffing resources which are difficult to assess at this time.
- The Council may be subject to replacement costs, currently approximately £500 per bench, this dependent on the nature of any agreement.

### **Recommendations**

Members are invited to note the report and consider the following:

- Approval that Witney Town Council accepts ownership of the proposed benches, and therefore ongoing maintenance costs for the proposed benches in line with a Memorial Bench Policy, once adopted.