

**MEETING OF THE
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

Held on Monday, 11 April 2022

At 7.00 pm in the Main Hall, The Corn Exchange, Witney

Present:

Councillor J Aitman (Chair)

Councillors:	L Duncan	D Enright
	L Ashbourne	V Gwatkin
	T Ashby	R Smith
	O Collins	
Officers:	Adam Clapton	Deputy Town Clerk
	Sharon Groth	Town Clerk
	Simon Wright	Democratic & Legal Services Officer
Others:	No members of the public.	

161 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Bolger, Butterfield, Eaglestone, Harvey, Jones, McMahon, Prosser and Temple.

162 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest from members or officers.

163 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 February 2022 and of the extraordinary meeting held on 16 March 2022 were approved and adopted.

164 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

165 **WITNEY COMMUNITY POLICING ISSUES**

There was no update from Thames Valley Police.

166 **AN UPDATE FROM WITNEY OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCILLORS AND WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCILLORS**

Oxfordshire County Council (OCC)

Councillor Enright advised that OCC was providing support to Ukrainian families in partnership with the district council. OCC were providing safeguarding and social care support and information was available on their website.

It was further reported that a planning application was being submitted for improvement works on the A40 and the Compulsory Purchase Orders associated with the scheme were also being progressed.

West Oxfordshire District Council (WODC)

Councillor Ashbourne reported that a portal was available on the WODC to allow residents to report fly tipping.

167 **REPORT BACK FROM THE COUNCILLORS ON THE WORK WITH EXTERNAL BODIES WHERE THEY SERVE AS THE TOWN COUNCIL'S NOMINATED REPRESENTATIVE**

Witney Educational Foundation (WEF)

Councillor Aitman reported that WEF was planning to assist Ukrainian refugees in the district by providing funding for school clothes, IT equipment and other resources.

Councillor Duncan advised that four schools had accessed funding from WEF towards the Jubilee Green Canopy scheme.

Witney Town Charity

Councillor Aitman reported that the charity was looking to support the provision of youth services in the town.

168 **CLIMATE, BIODIVERSITY & PLANNING - 15 FEBRUARY, 8 MARCH & 29 MARCH 2022**

The Chair of the Committee presented the above minutes to Council and moved their acceptance.

Minute No. P88 – Lake & Country Park Rewilding – The Deputy Town Clerk advised that the agreement with Wild Witney was yet to be finalised. It was suggested and agreed that details be circulated by email to the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee for consideration with the agreement to be ratified at a Council meeting but the group be allowed to commence work, subject to that approval.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the Climate, Biodiversity & Planning Advisory Committee meeting held on 5 February, 8 March & 29 March 2022 be received and any recommendations therein approved.

169 **PARKS & RECREATION COMMITTEE - 7 MARCH 2022**

The Chair of the Committee presented the above minutes to Council and moved their acceptance.

Minute No. PR102 – Skate Park – The Deputy Town Clerk reported that the budget set aside was not sufficient to finance the project. An option to look at grant funding, including from the Make Space for Girls Fund, was being explored.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the Parks & Recreation Committee meeting held on 7 March 2022 be received and any recommendations therein approved.

170 **HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE - 14 MARCH 2022**

The Vice-Chair of the committee presented the above minutes to Council and moved their acceptance.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the Halls, Cemeteries & Allotments Committee meeting held on 14 March 2022 be received and any recommendations therein approved

171 **STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE - 21 MARCH 2022**

The Chair of the committee presented the above minutes to Council and moved their acceptance.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the Stronger Communities Committee meeting held on 21 March 2022 be received and any recommendations therein approved.

172 **POLICY, GOVERNANCE & FINANCE COMMITTEE - 28 MARCH 2022**

The Vice-Chair of the Committee presented the above minutes to Council and moved their acceptance.

Minute No. F140 – Financial Report & Associated Matters – A member referred to recommendation 10 in respect of a request for a rent reduction. It was proposed and agreed that the rent be retained at the previous rate.

Resolved:

That the minutes of the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee meeting held on 28 March 2022 be received and any recommendations therein approved subject to recommendation 10 being amended to reflect that the rent is not increased and is charged at the previous level.

173 **FUTURE MEETINGS OF THE COUNCIL**

The Council considered whether committee meetings should be held virtually from April 2022 meaning they would revert to being advisory with delegations in place for urgent matters.

Members considered current Covid rates, availability of members and officers and the impact on decision making. It was suggested, and agreed, that councillors views be sought on whether to return to face to face meetings with feedback being reported at the next Council meeting.

Members noted that a Climate, Biodiversity & Planning Committee was scheduled for 19 April and it was agreed that this would be held virtually.

Resolved:

1. That, councillors be consulted on what format meetings should take with the situation regarding meetings being reviewed at the next Council meeting; and
2. That, the Climate, Biodiversity & Planning Committee on 19 April 2022 be held virtually.

174 **CIVIC ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The report of the Town Mayor was received.

The Mayor thanked everybody involved in arranging and attending the Civic Reception that had been held on the previous Friday.

Resolved:

That the report be noted.

175 **TO AGREE A MAYOR ELECT**

A member proposed Cllr L Duncan as Mayor for the municipal year 2022/23. This was seconded and all were in favour.

Resolved:

That Cllr L Duncan be declared Mayor Elect for the municipal year 2022/23.

176 **HEALTH, SAFETY & VANDALISM**

Consideration was given to the report of the Maintenance & Environmental Services Officer.

Members noted that the bike repair stands were being well used but expressed disappointment at the vandalism of the stand at The Leys. It was suggested, and agreed, that the stand could be moved closer to the Coffee Shed where CCTV was in place.

Resolved:

1. That, the report be noted; and
2. That, the bike repair stand on The Leys be moved if possible.

177 **COMMUNICATION FROM THE LEADER**

There were no communications to be reported.

178 **CORRESPONDENCE**

Definitive Map and Statement

Correspondence from Oxfordshire County Council regarding the Notice of Definitive Map and Statement Legal Event Modification Order 2022 was received and noted.

Levelling Up White Paper

The National Association of Local Councils summary on the Government paper which was published on 2 February 2022 setting out how the UK Government will spread opportunity more equally across the UK was received and noted.

179 **QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

There were no questions submitted.

180 **UKRAINE**

Councillors received information regarding support available to Ukrainian refugees in West Oxfordshire together with a briefing paper prepared by NALC. A member highlighted the work being undertaken by Oxfordshire County Council and West Oxfordshire District Council.

Consideration was given to how the Town Council could help and it was suggested, and agreed, that free use of the Corn Exchange could be offered for events and support for refugees. Discussion ensued regarding information being available on the Town Council website, showing support by displaying the refugee flag and a window display at the Corn Exchange. It was suggested that the Stronger Communities Committee could oversee the issue on behalf of the Town Council.

It was agreed that contact be made with the District Council to ascertain how best to work in partnership and that options raised at the meeting be further investigated.

Resolved:

1. That, discussions be held with West Oxfordshire District Council to look at how support can be best provided; and
2. That, the suggestions raised at the meeting in respect of support be further investigated.

181 **OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-25**

The Oxfordshire County Council Strategic Plan and vision for 2022-25 was received.

Resolved:

That, the Strategic Plan and Vision for 2022-25 be noted.

182 **STANDARDS IN PUBLIC LIFE - REVIEW OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT ETHICAL STANDARDS (2019)**

Members noted that in response to a review, the government restated its position (in-line with the 2011 Localism Act legislation) that recommendations can be more appropriately and effectively taken forward by local authorities, rather than through further legislation.

An Early Day Motion 691 by Dr Julian Lewis, MP calls on the government to establish an appropriate and effective sanctions mechanism to deal with local councillors who have been found guilty of bullying and harassment following an independent investigation.

Members resolved that a letter be sent encouraging the local MP to support this motion.

Resolved:

That, a letter be sent to the local MP, Robert Courts, encouraging him to support the Early Day Motion.

183 **SEALING OF DOCUMENTS**

There were no documents sealed.

184 **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.

185 **PROPERTY & LEGAL MATTERS**

The Committee received and considered the confidential report of the Town Clerk concerning property and legal matters.

Resolved:

1. That, the Council agrees to be part of a consortium in respect of the land identified in the report and to pledge up to £25k so long as it is proportionate to that of other partners contributing, and subject to a legal agreement; and
2. That, that the Town Clerk in consultation with the Town Mayor be delegated to make decisions on any urgent matters, other than financial, as necessary.

The meeting closed at: 8.20 pm

Chair