

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

**Held on Monday, 11 July 2022**

**At 6.00 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney**

**Present:**

Councillor O Collins (Chair)

Councillors:	J Aitman	L Duncan
	L Ashbourne	R Smith
Officers:	Sharon Groth	Town Clerk
	Adam Clapton	Deputy Town Clerk
Others:	None	

**SC354 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors V Gwatkin, H Eaglestone and A Prosser.

**SC355 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest from members or officers.

**SC356 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the committee held on 30 May 2022 were received.

**SC256 – Communications & Community Engagement Report**

In response to a Member, the Deputy Town Clerk advised that ‘You Said, We Did’ videos with members had yet to take place in response to the customer satisfaction survey. A letter outlining comments on services in the remit of the County Council had been issued to its Chief Executive, Leader, and other members of that Authority.

**SC257 - Town Hall Window Community Use**

The Deputy Town Clerk reported this had been promoted at the Witney Forum of local groups and there had been keen interest in using this space.

**SC260 – Oxford Playhouse**

The Chair drew attention to this item and advised this recommendation had been overturned at the Policy, Governance & Finance meeting on 6 June. The decision was in response to further correspondence which was considered at the meeting.

**SC263 – Litter & Dog Waste Bins**

A member advised they had spoken on behalf of the Town Council at the District Council's Environmental Scrutiny meeting to raise issues with its policy and communication.

**Resolved:**

That, the minutes of the Stronger Committee held on 30 May 2022 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

SC357 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

SC358 **FINANCE REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the financial report showing figures for aspects under its remit for the last Quarter, provided by the Town Clerk & Chief Executive Officer.

In response to a Member, the Town Clerk explained the committee had higher costs than others due to the nature of its work, and not many ways of generating income. The movement to/from the general reserve related to the budgets which had been rolled over from the previous years.

**Resolved:**

That, the finance report be noted.

*Cllr L Ashbourne joined the meeting at 6.15pm*

SC359 **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Communications & Community Engagement Officer concerning community engagement projects.

Members were advised on the plans for the national 'In-Bloom' and the local 'Schools In Bloom' projects which were coming to fruition by the end of July. In addition, it was agreed the Council should support Love Your Parks week as it had previously and could promote recent litter-picking equipment purchased by the Council for community use.

There was discussion on Car Free Day, which this year fell on Thursday 22 September. As a Market Day, Market Square would not be useable but the areas outside the Corn Exchange and the Town Hall might be available if the County Council was agreeable to the request. Members agreed with officer suggestions on a Charabanc and asked that WOCT also be asked if they would like to be involved. A discount offer at the Corn Exchange 1863 bar could also be promoted via QR code on the main footpath and cycle path approaches into the town centre.

Further updates were provided on Championing Local and Christmas engagement with members noting the launch of the annual Christmas competitions and agreeing that the Rotary Club of Witney should be approached to see if they would like to manage the Christmas Lights Switch-on event. This would run as it had previously on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> November at 6pm with a grant provided to the Club from the Town Council. The Committee also agreed that sponsorship should be sought for a second Christmas tree in Market Square.

**Resolved:**

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the Town Council supports Love Your Parks Week, 29 July – 5 August, as it had in 2021 with the addition of promoting community litter picking equipment and,
3. That, Oxfordshire County Council is approached to see if the highway outside the Town Hall could be used as a base for activities in respect of Car Free Day and,
4. That, a Charabanc is requested from the Oxford Bus Museum for Car Free Day and,
5. That, West Oxfordshire Community Transport are asked if they would like to be involved with Car Free Day and,
6. That, the Communications & Community Engagement and Venue & Events Officers develop a discount scheme for 1863 on Car Free Day to promote active travel and,
7. That, the updates on Championing Local and Christmas competitions be noted and,
8. That, sponsorship is sought for the second Christmas tree in Market Square and,
9. That, the Rotary Club of Witney be approached to see if they would like to run the 2022 Christmas Lights Switch-on event on Friday 25<sup>th</sup> November at 6pm on the same terms as in previous years, to include a grant from the Council.

SC360 **COMMUNICATIONS REPORT & COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY REVIEW**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Communications and Community Engagement Officer concerning communications and strategy review.

Members welcomed the review and noted the updates and suggestions provided. It was pleasing to see that so many actions were either completed or in development.

With regard to the Website, members noted that the current website was suitable and for what was required but recognised the benefit of outsourcing the hosting to an external provider. This would help facilitate a transfer to a Gov.uk template and free up officer time while also retaining some editorial control to update pages and news items. It was agreed that officers should obtain quotes for this project to present at the September meeting and in the meantime the streamlining of the Website should continue with an 'Our Partners' page added so this could be migrated as and when required.

Members also noted the Press & Media Coverage attachment and thanked officers for recent social media posts which were eye-catching and promoting the positive work of the Council.

**Resolved:**

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the additions to the Communications Strategy (as circulated), be incorporated into the updated document and,
3. That, officers seek quotations for outsourcing the website in time for the next meeting of the Committee and,
4. That, the current website continues to be streamlined and an 'Our Partners' page added and,
5. That, the Press and Media Coverage be noted.

SC361 **TOWN COUNCIL REBRANDING**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Communications & Community Engagement Officer concerning the Town Council's rebranding.

Members were advised the process had been delayed due to other commitments and the brief for the project had changed but the Task and Finish Group had agreed on the logo, as presented. It was intended to be solely an organisational and administrative logo and the town crest would remain the official heraldic 'town' arms for legislative purposes.

The Committee welcomed the proposed logo and recognised the sentiment behind it, including the colours which represented a traditional Witney three-point blanket. It was modern and represented a distinct change and direction of the Town Council.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the Town Council adopts the new logo for administrative and livery purposes.

SC362 **YOUTH SERVICES GRANT 2022**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk concerning the Youth Services Grant criteria and timeframe for the awarding of funds.

Members agreed the timetable and looked forward to receiving applications when the scheme opened at the beginning of August.

**Resolved:**

1. That, the Youth Services Grant award timetable be agreed.

SC363 **WITNEY VOICE BOX CHOIR GRANT REQUEST**

The Committee received and considered a grant request from Witney Voice Box Choir towards funds for a free concert in the Langdale Hall, Witney.

Members were aware that a Platinum Jubilee concert was hugely oversubscribed, and this performance would provide a further free event, which could be accessed by many more residents in the community. Although the committee was not responsible for the financial management of the Council, it welcomed the application.

**Recommended:**

1. That, Witney Voice Box Choir be awarded £100 from the Town Council's grant budget and,
2. That, this recommendation be forwarded to the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee.

SC364 **HAPPY TO CHAT BENCH**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Project Officer concerning the Happy to Chat Bench.

The Town Council would be project managing this matter as the parties who had shown interest in the project had not been able to pursue it themselves. Members were pleased the local Methodist Church had shown an interest in helping those at the bench but felt that a timetable for representatives was not needed at this time. Likewise, the District Council was about to embark on a project with the Samaritans so their contact details would be placed elsewhere.

A concerted effort would be needed not to deter the use of the bench for rest so no plaque should be attached, and attention should only be drawn by painting the bench through the use of colour.

**Resolved:**

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, that the bench be painted in the colours of the newly adopted Town Council logo and the words 'Happy to Chat Bench' are painted on the wooden slats.

SC365 **QUEEN'S PLATINUM JUBILEE - LEGACY PROJECT**

The Committee considered potential wording for a plaque to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Project in Unterhaching Park, which now seemed possible following the District Council's indication a licence could be granted.

Members agreed on a simple dedication for the plaque on the sundial, 'Installed by Witney Town Council to honour the Platinum Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II, 2022'.

**Resolved:**

That, the wording as above be incorporated onto a plaque for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee sundial at Unterhaching Park.

SC366 **AUTUMN & WINTER PLANTING**

The Committee received a verbal update on Autumn and Winter planting, as provided by the Maintenance & Environmental Services Officer.

Members were advised that plants had already been ordered directly by the Council based on a previous resolution to adhere to what had been done before, but there was still a chance to vary a colour scheme.

Approval was also sought to remove concrete planting troughs along the top of The Leys Recreation Ground and to change Burwell Hall bedding to perennial shrub planting as the flowers were regularly disturbed and taken out by the public. There was agreement that the troughs needed to be replaced but there was hope a budget could be included for their replacement in the new year. It was disappointing that plants outside Burwell Hall were being treated poorly so it was a sensible approach to plant something hardy in this area.

**Resolved:**

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the planting scheme match the colours of the newly adopted Town Council logo and,

3. That, the planters at The Leys recreation Ground be removed. A replacement to be sought in time for the Spring/Summer planting 2023 and,
4. That, bedding planting outside Burwell Hall be replaced with hardy perennial shrubs.

SC367 **THIRD PARTY & LARGE EVENTS**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Venue & Events Officer concerning third party and large events.

The Chair started by thanking all organisers of the events held so far in the year. They had all been most welcomed and were a credit to all who had contributed to their success.

The Committee were pleased to learn that LibFest would be returning to the Leys in 2023 and acknowledged that the schedule of events would need to be refined to accommodate all events in that year. With a tight summer schedule, any further requests would need to be considered on their scale on a case-to-case basis.

The Town Clerk suggested that many of these larger events had received funds from the Town Council but this wasn't knowingly promoted during the event so the committee agreed that banners stating, 'Supported by Witney Town Council' should be purchased and provided.

**Resolved:**

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the events who have shown an interest in returning in 2023 be accommodated where possible and,
3. That, the request from BBOWT to hold a free pop-up education stand at the Leys Recreation Ground during the summer be granted and,
4. That, the Town Council purchases banners to be loaned to event organisers stating, Supported by Witney Town Council, where funds have been provided and,
5. That, the feedback from OPA and Oxford Playhouse be noted.

SC368 **REMEMBRANCE**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Venue & Events Officer concerning Remembrance Sunday.

Feedback had been received following last year's event, the first run by the Town Council with Covid-19 circulating so this year presented a new challenge. After discussion on potential arrangements, it was agreed information should be sought from other local Parish & Town Council's on their events. Following that, a final decision on how to proceed could be established via a small task and finish group.

**Resolved:**

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the Town Clerk contacts other local town councils to understand their plans for the service of remembrance and,
3. That, this information be passed to a small task and finish group of the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and Leader to formulate a plan for the day and,

4. That, once finalised, the running order and arrangements be communicated to all relevant groups and parties at the earliest opportunity and,
5. That, 1000 service sheets are printed in 2022 and that recycling points are advertised at the end of the service and,
6. That, the purchase of 30 crowd control barriers be agreed and,
7. That, local event traffic management training for town council staff be agreed.

SC369 **ADVENT FAYRE**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Venue & Events Officer concerning the annual Advent Fayre.

Members supported the continuation of the event as in previous years on the last Sunday in November. This year, more than ever, the Town Council should be hosting this free event for children in the run up to Christmas. There was a suggestion the Fayre could be advertised in local schools and the budget should be stretched to include as many events as possible.

**Resolved:**

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the Advent Fayre is held on the last Sunday in November based on the same format as previous years with Father Christmas in attendance in a grotto and,
3. That, Witney Model Club be granted permission to use an area of the hall during the event and,
4. That, The Town Crier be invited to take part in the event and,
5. That, schools are advised of the event and,
6. That, Winter Wonderland be invited to take part.

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The meeting closed at: 7.49 pm

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Chair