

**MEETING OF THE WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

**Held on Wednesday 29 March 2017**

**At 7pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall**

**Present:**

Councillor C Holliday (Chairman)

Councillors:	S E Bartington	H B Eaglestone
	A K Beames	D S Enright
	C Brown	A D Harvey
	H W Chirgwin	J S King
	B J Churchill	L M Price
	P J Dorward	C E Reynolds
	J M Doughty	D Temple
		C K Woodward

Officers:	Town Clerk	Responsible Financial Officer
	Democratic Services Officer	

Also present: Mr David Tole – Oxfordshire County Council Highways  
3 Members of the Public

165 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

166 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest in matters to be discussed at the meeting.

167 **MINUTES**

**a) RESOLVED:** to confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 1 February 2017 for signature by the Chairman with the following amendments:

List of members present: Doward to read Dorward;  
Cllr Enright entered at 7.02pm and not 6.02pm.

**b) MATTERS ARISING**

Minute 60b – The Leader stated that in relation to the local plan in the minutes of the Extraordinary Council meeting of 14 December 2016 there were three words missing and said that it should have been recorded as follows:

*The Leader stated that he had made his thoughts clear. The development of North Witney was something that the Inspector had asked for **more information/clarity** on.*

168 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

Mr Richard Thomas asked the Council questions relating to the Unitary Council proposal. This was an agenda item to be discussed later in the meeting.

169 **WITNEY COMMUNITY POLICING ISSUES**

There were no police present at the meeting.

170 **OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL HIGHWAYS SERVICES**

The Mayor welcomed David Tole from OCC Highways Department who had come to speak to the Council about changes that would be coming. The Department was facing cuts to budget and staff. It therefore wanted to talk to the big players in the County and to listen to what they could do to make the service fit as well as possible.

The county was growing but the network was not growing with it. The Area Stewards would have more incorporated into their roles such as trees, bridges and drainage. This would be the case irrespective of there being a Unitary Council or not. The service would need to rely increasingly on business rates for funding.

Mr Tole asked the Council what it thought the service could do better and how they could work better with the community. Members asked questions on the following:

- Area steward attendance at Traffic Advisory meetings
- Significance of A40 to Witney
- How the Department could work with District Council and sharing services
- Fix My Street
- Potholes – temporary fixes
- Role of volunteers
- Quality of work and quality control checking
- Devolution of services
- Pavements (uneven slabs)
- New Bridge street crossing and disabled access to it
- Length of the contract with the contractors
- Public database to follow up complaints/issues reported on Fix My Street
- Renewal of road markings
- Parking Restriction Orders.

Mr Tole promised to feed all the questions and comments back and was encouraged by the Council's response.

171 **MINUTES OF COMMITTEES AND SUB COMMITTEES**

a) **PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE – 21 FEBRUARY AND 14 MARCH 2017**

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

**RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the Planning and Development Committee of 21 February and 14 March 2017 as detailed be received and any recommendations therein approved.

b) AMENITIES COMMITTEE – 6 MARCH 2017

The Chairman of the Committee presented the above minutes to Council and moved their acceptance. A member asked if there was any progress in relation to Park Road play area but the Town Clerk replied that there had not been.

The Town Clerk referred to minute no A106 concerning Premier Tennis and reported that Premier Tennis wished to submit an amended proposal for consideration. She had consulted with the Leader who had suggested that given the lateness of the proposal and the full agenda already prepared this matter be referred back to the relevant Committee.

**RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the Amenities Committee of 6 March 2017 as detailed be received and any recommendation therein approved.

c) COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE – 13 MARCH 2017

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

A member referred to minute no C126 and reported that Deer Park Medical Centre would close on Friday.

Minute C124 – the Town Clerk reported that the day following the meeting the organiser of Witney Music Festival had telephoned from America to make the deposit payment. Unfortunately the card he was using was not able to be authorised. He would not be back in this country until the middle of April. A member suggested contacting one of the other organisers to obtain the deposit.

Minute C122 – A member congratulated the Communications Officer on her forthcoming article in the SLCC Clerks' Magazine.

**RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the Community Services Committee of 13 March 2017 as detailed be received with the amendments detailed above and any recommendation therein approved.

d) POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 20 MARCH 2017

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

A member raised concerns on why the Committee had gone against the Council's Financial Regulations regarding the Oxlease Play Area. He pointed out that according to the minutes of the Working Party, a resolution to accept the HAGS quote if All Play could not come in with a revised design retaining specific items, had been overturned at the following meeting as the revised quote had not retained those items. He did not see how the Council could be sure that the public could be supportive of this design if it had not had the opportunity to see the other designs that had come in. He pointed out that the Council's Financial Regulations were to protect Councillors and get best value. Officers had advised against the decision taken and more public money was being spent than was necessary. He felt strongly that the Council had a duty to get best value and proposed that the matter should be referred back to Policy and Resources.

A member commented that it appeared to be what the community had wanted and if All Play installed both the gym equipment and the play equipment there would be a cost saving – this was why he had supported the proposal.

The Chairman of the Cogges Meadow Park Group wanted to reassure the Council that there had been consultation and the Town Council had only made a small contribution to the cost of the project. Heritage had been a driving principle behind the design brief and it had been felt that All Play had reflected this. The WREN Grant providing the majority of the funding would be lost if the Council could not approve this project at the meeting.

The member was still unconvinced that best value was being obtained and made a formal proposal that the project should go back to the next Policy and Resources Committee for further consideration. The Leader responded that in his opinion best value had been reached as the project would deliver the park that had come out of the consultation.

Members voted on the proposal. 3 members were in favour and 14 were against. The proposal was not carried.

The Leader acknowledged that the project still had a shortfall in funding. He proposed that the Council should cover the £12,500 shortfall until the community group had obtained the funding via other means. Members voted on the proposal. 2 members voted against and 15 voted for the proposal which was therefore carried.

**RESOLVED:**

- 1) that the minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee of 20 March 2017 as detailed be received and any recommendation therein approved;
- 2) that that the Council covers the £12, 500 shortfall for the Oxlease Play Area Project until the community group had obtained the funding via other means.

e) SPECIAL POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 29 MARCH 2017

A verbal report was given of the meeting held earlier that evening, concerning proposals for new hall hire charges and the Chairman moved their acceptance.

**RESOLVED:** that the verbal report from the Special Policy and Resources Committee held on 29 March 2017 be approved and any recommendations contained therein be accepted.

172 **TO AGREE THE MAYOR ELECT**

A member proposed Cllr Woodward as Mayor for the municipal year 2017/18.

**RESOLVED:** that Cllr Woodward be declared Mayor Elect for the municipal year 2017/18.

173 **CIVIC ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Council received and considered the Mayor's report of engagements he had undertaken.

**RESOLVED:** that the report be noted.

174 **COMMUNICATION FROM THE LEADER**

The Leader reported he had met with the new MP Robert Courts about local issues, including subsidisation of sports facilities and VAT surrounding community fund raising.

The Leader had also met with a new initiative – Witney and Children First. Their aim was to step into the breach left by the closure of the Children’s Centres. They were bidding for money from OCC to fund a similar service that would have connections with Base 33. Initially the group were just asking for the Council’s official support for the project and a letter stating this. He felt that some money from the grant pot could be donated to the group.

**RESOLVED:** that the Council supports the new initiative in principle and writes a letter of support for Witney and Children First.

175 **CORPORATE RISK ASSESSMENT**

The Council received and considered the report of the Town Clerk and the Corporate Risk assessment along with the Risk Management Policy for 2017.

**RESOLVED:** that the Corporate Risk Assessment and Action Plan as presented be approved and the Chairman of the Council be authorised to sign it.

176 **ONE OXFORDSHIRE – CONSULTATION ON UNITARY COUNCIL**

Members held a lengthy discussion on the proposals from Oxfordshire County Council for a unitary Council.

*Cllr Harvey left the meeting at 8.50pm.*

**RESOLVED:**

1) that the Town Clerk writes to the Secretary of State, Robert Courts MP, and the leaders of the District and County Councils outlining the 4 pledges that Witney Town Council wishes to see out of any potential re-organisation of local government:

- The Town Council wants decision making to be as local as possible
- The Town Council wants the best outcome for Witney residents
- The Town Council does not want Witney taxpayers to pay more than they should if a unitary system is introduced
- The Town Council supports tying up strategic services.

2) that a Working Party be established at Annual Council on this issue.

177 **CORRESPONDENCE**

There was no correspondence.

178 **QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

A member asked if the Consultation Working Party could consider the Strategic Health Plan.

**RESOLVED:** that delegated authority be given to the Consultation Working Party to respond to avoid delay.

*Subsequently due to the imminent deadline of the consultation and being unable to form the Consultation Working Party in a timely manner the members agreed that Cllr Mrs B J Churchill and the Town Clerk should respond.*

179 **SEALING OF DOCUMENTS**

There were no documents to be sealed.

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The meeting closed at 9.25pm.

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Chairman