

MEETING OF THE WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Monday 9 October 2017

At 7pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall

Present:

Councillor C K Woodward (Chairman)

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

Officers: Town Clerk Responsible Financial Officer
Democratic Services Officer

Also present: 2 members of Thames Valley Police
2 members of the public

490 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for their absence were received from Cllrs Doughty and Harvey; the Leader of West Oxfordshire District Council Cllr Mills and the Leader of Oxfordshire County Council Cllr Hudspeth.

491 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

492 **MINUTES**

The Council received and considered the minutes of the meeting held on 7 August 2017.

- a) **RESOLVED:** to confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 7 August 2017 for signature by the Chairman.
- b) **MATTERS ARISING:** there were no matters arising from the minutes to be discussed at the meeting.

493 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

The Council adjourned in line with Standing Order 42 so that a member of the public - Mr Richard Thomas - could address the Committee about agenda item 7 (f) – Minutes of the Unitary Council Working Party, 11 September 2017.

The Committee reconvened following the address by the member of the public.

494 **WITNEY COMMUNITY POLICING ISSUES**

PC Cochrane introduced the new area Sergeant, Paul Jackson.

He provided an update on crime figure in Witney which in total was up by 26%. The total increase in crime in West Oxfordshire was up by 16% and crime in the Thames Valley was up by 13%.

In the summer Operation Jellybean had addressed anti-social behaviour and during the last 5 weeks the police had been targeting drugs houses and had shut 3 down.

PC Cochrane expressed his disappointment that this was the first time that he had reported substantial increases in crime but added that they were working hard to make the new system work.

A member commented that the figures were depressing, especially the violent crime being up by 50%. He had heard that people regarded Witney as a “soft spot” due to lack of police resources. Sgt Jackson replied that he was pushing hard to get more resources back in Witney as they were currently going to Oxford.

A member suggested that it might be helpful if members wrote individually to the Police and Crime Commissioner about this. All agreed and asked for a letter to be sent from the Town Council as well.

The Leader of the Council thanked the police for the incredible job that they did and said that it was indeed a matter of resources.

RESOLVED:

1. that the update be noted;
2. that members individually write to the Police and Crime Commissioner highlighting the increase in crime and lack of resources in the town;
3. that a letter be sent from the Town Council to the Police and Crime Commissioner highlighting the increase in crime and lack of resources in the town.

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

The Leader had requested that this item be added to the agenda as a standing item as he thought it would be useful for all members to be updated.

Cllr Mrs Reynolds, WODC Cabinet Member for the Environment gave an update about the new recycling and refuse contract.

County Cllr Ms Price had attended the quarterly County Locality meeting and provided an update on funding for parish and town councils providing services that other tiers were no longer providing; Highways and Infrastructure Planning and Learning Disability and Elderly People’s services.

County Councillor Dr Bartington had also attended the same meeting and reported that the annual Public Health report was being published and electric blanket testing had taken place on 4 October. She added that Roadworks.org was being advised to get the latest updates on roadworks.

Cllr Enright was a member of the Planning Committee at WODC and reported that it was hoped the local plan would be approved in April. He added that a new company, Publica would be employing all council staff rather than WODC. WODC would own Publica along with Ubico.

RESOLVED: that the updates be noted.

496 **MINUTES OF COMMITTEES AND SUB COMMITTEES**

a) PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE – 22 AUGUST, 12 SEPTEMBER AND 3 OCTOBER 2017

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

Minute 488 – 3 October 2017

The Town Clerk had circulated a report on the street trading licencing application for a hot food van outside the Corn Exchange, which wished to trade in connection with the Wedding Fair. Members agreed that they would have no objection to the application being granted subject to the van being parked in the three parking spaces at the side of the Corn Exchange.

Minute 484 – 7 - 3 October 2017

The Town Clerk had received an e-mail from the Planning Officer on this application for 19 Cotswold Meadow who was minded to approve the application whilst the Town Council had objected to a 1.8m high fence on top of an existing retaining wall. Members still wanted to respond that they thought that 1.8m was high enough – this was in Planning Law as far as they were concerned.

Minute 484 – 11 – 3 October 2017

The application for the removal of the stud wall in 51 Market Square had been referred to Full Council as the Town Council was the custodian of the property. The Council agreed that it would not be appropriate to make a comment in these circumstances.

RESOLVED:

1. that the minutes of the Planning and Development Committee of 11 July and 1 August 2017 as detailed, be received and any recommendations therein approved;
2. that the response to the street trading licencing application be that Witney Town Council has no objection to the application being granted subject to the van being parked in the three parking spaces at the side of the Corn Exchange;

3. that for the application for 19 Cotswold Meadow the response remains that the Council does not wish the overall height of the fence and wall to be more than 1.8m;
4. that as it is custodian and landlord of 51 Market Square, the Town Council does not comment on the application to remove the stud wall.

b) ESTATES MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE – 4 SEPTEMBER 2017

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

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Estates Management Committee of 4 September 2017 as detailed, be received and any recommendations therein approved.

c) SPORTS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE – 11 SEPTEMBER 2017

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

Minute R428

The Leader commented that further to this meeting he had been disappointed to read a conflicting letter from the Witney Swifts Cricket Club in the Witney Gazette as he had the impression that communication was working well.

The Chairman of the Sports and Recreation Committee replied that she thought it was an internal issue within the club.

Minute R 434

Cllr Mrs Reynolds asked if the Council would like her to take up the issue of CCTV at Burwell up with WODC. The Town Clerk asked if she could take up the issue of CCTV at The Leys as well as she had been told in the past that there was money for this. Cllr Reynolds agreed to do this.

RESOLVED:

1. that the minutes of the Sports and Recreation Committee of 11 September 2017 as detailed, be received and any recommendations therein approved.
2. that Cllr Mrs Reynolds takes up the issue of CCTV at Burwell and The Leys with WODC.

d) COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE – 18 SEPTEMBER 2017

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

The Leader stated that he had sent apology for absence.

Minute C452

A member asked what was happening with Edible Gardens. Another member commented that she had been asked if they could have an area at Oxlease Park. The Town Clerk advised that this was Town Council land.

Another member said that she did not feel the minutes reflected the discussion that had taken place and the desire to find a solution – which, if it turned out to be that the Welch Way beds were the best option, the Town Council should work with them to enable this.

Minute C454

A member asked if there was an update on Libfest. The Town Clerk reported that she had spoken to them and they understood the need for maintenance on The Leys. They would not be holding the festival next year.

Minute C 455

A member advised that he had been in contact with a possible supplier for the blue plaques and would report back to a future meeting.

Another member commented that she had been approached by the Bartlett Taylor Trust who had offered grant funding for a stone trail.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Community Services Committee of 18 September 2017 as detailed, be received and any recommendations therein approved with Cllr Morris being added to the list of apologies.

e) POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 25 September 2017

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

Minute F468

The RFO advised that she had not been able to find any comparable quotations for an archiving system that included a franking machine. If the Council chose to move to a different system there would be a great deal of time needed to transfer the existing information, if in fact it was compatible. Given the minimal financial implication over the term of the lease Members agreed to remaining with the current supplier.

Minute F469

A member asked if the grant for the Royal British Legion had been issued as agreed. The RFO confirmed that it had.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Policy and Resources Committee of 25 September 2017 as detailed, be received and any recommendations therein approved.

f) UNITARY COUNCIL WORKING– 11 SEPTEMBER 2017

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

A member proposed that the resolution/response be sent to the relevant people and also to the Witney Gazette. Another member stated that she did not agree with the response as there was nothing about the County Council's partnership working in it. She thought a robust debate was needed in Council.

The Leader suggested the response could be modified by adding in Oxfordshire County Council as an example of partnership working. The member amended his proposal to include Oxfordshire County Council. Members voted on the proposal. 14 were in favour and 1 member abstained.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Unitary Council Working Party of 11 September 2017 as detailed, be received and any recommendations therein be approved with the addition of Oxfordshire County Council, in paragraph 2 of the recommendation after "West Oxfordshire District Council".

The resultant recommendation being as follows:

As a parish council, Witney Town Council is happy to cooperate with all and any levels of local council to improve understanding of their functions and work together to introduce efficiencies, provided that they are both financially and environmentally sustainable and in the best interests of the residents and businesses of Witney going forward. The Town Council feels that none of the unitary proposals for Oxfordshire meet the Council's aims and are in the interests of the people of Witney. Benefits can be delivered by other means; some of the suggestions coming forward for one website, one phone number for all services and a one stop shop for Oxfordshire County Council, West Oxfordshire District Council and Witney Town Council are all good ideas that merit further investigation but do not need a unitary council to be successful.

Witney Town Council supports the initiatives of West Oxfordshire District Council and Oxfordshire County Council in the work done with other councils, providing benefits and showing best practice. Witney Town Council supports the aims listed in the All Party Parliamentary Group for District Councils document (District Council collaboration and devolution in England – July 2017):-

- *flexibility in service design and provision;*
- *opportunities to re-evaluate and transform public services;*
- *increased capacity for collaboration partners;*
- *financial savings and reduced operation costs;*
- *district joint-working within functional economic areas which reflect a logical*
- *economic geography;*
- *reflect and respond to the needs of their communities;*
- *enhance local well-being of citizens and communities;*
- *shape economic development and growth across FEAs and other territorial spaces;*

- *cost reduction;*
- *a culture of collaboration;*
- *a shared sense of place and understanding of locality;*
- *awareness of each other's organisational cultures;*
- *shared and agreed purpose to the collaboration;*
- *trust in partners to deliver and to operate in the best interests of the partners;*
- *the place on which the collaboration is based must make sense to the partners;*
- *the political will to develop and pursue collaborative ventures.*

In the view of the Town Council, democracy and accountability should be kept as local as possible.

g) WORLD WAR 1 WORKING PARTY – (NOTES FROM THE MEETING OF) 19 SEPTEMBER AND 27 SEPTEMBER 2017

The Chairman of the Working Party presented the above notes/minutes to Council and moved their acceptance.

RESOLVED: that the notes/minutes of the World War 1 Working Party of 19 and 27 September 2017 as detailed, be received and any recommendations therein approved.

h) CHRISTMAS LIGHTS WORKING PARTY – 2 OCTOBER 2017

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

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Christmas Lights Working Party of 2 October 2017 as detailed, be received and any recommendations therein approved.

i) YOUTH COUNCIL WORKING PARTY – 9 OCTOBER 2017

The Chairman of the Working Party gave a verbal report of the meeting held earlier that evening.

RESOLVED: that the verbal report be noted.

497 **CIVIC ANNOUNCEMENTS**

This would be circulated after the meeting.

498 **REFERRED FROM ESTATES MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE 4 SEPTEMBER 2017 – PUBLIC HALLS USAGE UPDATE**

The Council received and considered the report of the RFO. She explained that the bookings system did not reflect things such as an hour between bookings for clearing/setting up and therefore the hall looked as though it had more capacity for bookings than it really had. Her suggestion was that for performance figures, a manual system was reverted to. The Leader commented that the system was still showing the hours the halls were booked for.

The Town Clerk found it hard to understand why the figures looked strange and more work was definitely needed. However, she did not think that a manual system was the answer and it

would not be sustainable. The RFO reported that one of the RBS staff was coming to do training at the end of the month so she would speak to her then.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted, with manual figures being submitted for the next Estates Management Committee meeting and the RFO speaking to the software company when they deliver training at the end of the month.

499 **CONCLUSION OF AUDIT FOR 31 MARCH 2017 REPORT**

The Council received and considered the report of the External Auditor as circulated with the agenda.

RESOLVED: that the Council note and approve the report of the External Auditor as circulated.

500 **REQUEST FROM WITNEY MUSIC FESTIVAL FOR 2018 DATE**

The Council received and considered email correspondence from Mr Eric Marshall requesting to hold Witney Music Festival on The Leys recreation ground on 18 August 2018, suggesting access being required from 15 August to 20 August 2018.

Members voted on this request. 13 members were in favour and 2 were against.

RESOLVED: that the request to hold the Witney Music Festival on the Leys Recreation Ground on 18 August 2017 be granted.

501 **COMMUNICATION FROM THE LEADER**

The Leader reminded members of the Mental Health Day taking place in the Corn Exchange the following day. The Mayor offered thanks to Paul Hicks and the Officers for organising this event.

RESOLVED: that the report from the Leader be noted.

502 **CORRESPONDENCE**

The Town Clerk had circulated an invitation to the NALC Larger Councils Conference and Exhibition and asked members to let her know if they wanted to attend.

The Town Clerk also had received correspondence from the CEO of NALC regarding a DCLG consultation on capping for local councils, which she read out. The closing date for response was 26 October.

A member commented that it did not mention that parish councils were taking on services from higher tier councils who had already been capped. Parish Councils had stepped into the breach to cover services.

The Leader suggested that the Consultation Working Party and Budget Working Party members convene a meeting to consider a response.

RESOLVED: that the Consultation Working Party and Budget Working Party members convene a meeting to consider a response to the consultation.

503 **QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

A member noted that there had been lots of apologies at the August Council meetings and asked if these meetings could be moved back into July. The Leader replied that he had spoken to the Town Clerk about this and it could prove difficult to implement. The Town Clerk would see what could be done when drawing up the next calendar of meetings.

RESOLVED: that the question be noted and consideration is given to this when drawing up the next calendar of meetings.

504 **SEALING OF DOCUMENTS**

There were no documents for sealing.

The meeting closed at 8.40pm

Chairman