

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

WEDNESDAY 14 MARCH 2018

MAYOR'S SUMMARY OF BUSINESS FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR OF 2018

This year has been an exciting year in the Town Council, with much business being attended to and significant progress being made in enhancing Council services and facilities.

Our Committees have picked up the gauntlet from the surveys that have been undertaken after the previous town meetings. This data helps us to create a template of aspirations and tasks moving forward days, months and years down the line.

We have seen some wonderful improvements across our play parks, notably down at Oxlease, and the forthcoming upgrades to the Leys mini-golf / tennis courts and the play area at Raleigh Crescent. The latter having just appointed a Project Manager to oversee concept, financing and delivery in liaison with the District Council. We also welcome greater use of the facilities up at West Witney, with the Park Run being tremendously successful. It is exciting to see so many people come and enjoy the recreation areas that Witney boasts. We are also committed to the professional maintenance of our spaces to the best standards, a prime example of this is the rejuvenation of the ground and facilities on The Leys, due to start in a couple of months it should be a massive improvement, sports clubs will once again be proud to welcome teams to their Home Games.

Across our estate, our halls and facilities have continued to be used by members of the public, groups and parties. Whilst we strive to have maximum booking of the hall, the Council is aware that it still has a bit of work to get it where we want it. The determination of the Public Halls Officer is relentless and usage statistics continue to rise despite a competitive market for space in the town. We have also engaged with The ICE Centre to re-open the Langdale Hall. We welcome Jill and the ICE community from our neighbours in Carterton and hope that they will feel right at home in Witney and in Langdale. We continue to monitor usage of all of the estate, and again, strive to maintain the upkeep of these facilities in peak condition. There are further cosmetic enhancements planned for some of the halls in the coming months. I am also pleased to report that significant progress has been made with our friends at West Witney Sports and Social Club, to bring them up to the expected standard of health and safety compliance, and to build the bridges of partnership between the Council and the club.

This year we have had arguably some of the best community response to local activities and events, with the commemoration of the battle of Passchendaele, Merchant Navy Day, the summer play day at King Georges Field, the Annual Service of Remembrance and our Christmas Lights Switch-on event. Whilst Witney Town Council facilitates, promotes and supports these events - they cannot be done without the support of the public, and this year it has been nothing short of overwhelming. Record crowds came to pay their respects at the Remembrance, and welcome Christmas with a spectacular switch on. Witney has also enjoyed a glorious summer of events with the Carnival, LibFest and the Music Festival. The Council is, and always has been committed to working with the community.

For town planning, Town Councillors views have been sought on 252 applications this year ranging from proposed minor developments including extensions and conservatories, Construction of Industrial buildings, Hotels and housing developments; of the 252 - 161 of Witney Town Councils opinions were endorsed and 17 applications were withdrawn, a few were contrary and the remainder of applications considered are awaiting the final WODC determination... Of all of the Committees, the planning Committee is most proud of the attendance of the public and their participation in relation to applications, either for or against them.

The Council continues to maintain excellent finances and members of the Town Council take the responsibility for greater transparency of its actions and finances seriously and residents should be reassured that the Town Council's finances come under stringent scrutiny and external examination throughout the year. A copy of the Internal Auditors reports, Financial Statements and Annual Return are available for inspection, on request, at the Town Hall or on the website under Strategic Documents. Whilst we take every precaution with our finances to ensure we maintain a healthy reserve, we also plan for capital improvements across the estate with costings and budgets discussed and reviewed at most meetings.

This has been a thoroughly enjoyable year to be your Mayor of Witney - I work with a group of passionate and dedicated colleagues who only want the very best for Witney. As ever, the invitations to Town Council meetings cannot be understated - you will receive a warm welcome from all.

My thanks to everyone for attending this evening, I hope you will all take the opportunity to meet with the Committee chairs and members to discuss their reports, ask questions and enjoy the hospitality laid on at the front.

Cllr Chris Woodward, Mayor of Witney