

MEETING OF THE WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Monday 23 April 2018

At 7pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall

Present:

Councillor C K Woodward (Chairman)

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

Officers: Town Clerk Democratic Services Officer
Operations & Estates Officer

Others: Sgt Cochrane - Thames Valley Police
Judy Nine and Colin Shone – Cogges Manor Farm
19 members of the public

181 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for their absence were received from Cllrs Beames and Harvey.

182 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

183 **MINUTES**

The Council received and considered the minutes of the meeting held on 19 February and the Extraordinary meeting held on 12 March 2018.

- a) **RESOLVED:** to confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 19 February and the Extraordinary meeting held on 12 March 2018 for signature by the Chairman.
- b) **MATTERS ARISING:** there were no matters arising.

184 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

The Committee adjourned in line with Standing Order 42 so Mr David West on behalf of the Witney Music Festival, and Mr Wilson on behalf of the Witney Feast could address the Council.

185 **PRESENTATION BY COGGES MANOR FARM**

The Chairman proposed that this item should be moved up the agenda so that the public present could also listen to the presentation. The Council remained adjourned whilst the presentation took place.

Judy Niner from Cogges Manor Farm outlined how the Trust had reached its current position since it had taken over from OCC. She then proceeded to outline the plans for the future, which included the construction of a Saxon Longhouse in an area off the car park. She explained that the Trust needed to increase funds raised in order to access a large funding stream from the Heritage Lottery Fund and all funding would be welcomed.

The Chairman thanked her for her presentation and invited questions.

A member commented that the Farm had been a tremendous success story. She had a concern about the amount of traffic and parking issues and wondered if the Council could work with the Trust on this. She also had concerns about anti-social behaviour taking place in the Saxon Longhouse.

Judy Niner explained that they planned to limit their current disabled car park to just ten spaces and only for blue badge holders as it was people driving and parking on Church Lane that caused the most issues. They were also hoping to create a path across from the main car park for access. On the subject of anti-social behaviour, the plan was to engage those who might otherwise commit anti-social behaviour, and to build strong links with the community.

The Council reconvened following the presentation.

186 **WITNEY COMMUNITY POLICING ISSUES**

The Council welcomed Sgt Cochrane once again.

On this occasion, as it was so close to the start of the fiscal year, he had no crime data to present. However, issues included theft of high powered cars from people outside the area which were used to commit crime elsewhere, and drugs. There had been several substantial drugs raids recently both due to warrants and door knocks. The drugs issues fed into the exploitation of young people between 13 – 16, and he had been pleased to hear that Cogges Manor Farm was intending to engage with these young people.

High priorities for the police currently were burglaries, and drugs which linked with child exploitation.

A member asked if there were links with the drugs cases in Banbury. Sgt Cochrane confirmed that there were links, partly due to Witney being close to the motorway network.

Another member asked if shoplifting was still a problem. Sgt Cochrane replied that when the people higher up the drugs chain came into the town, there was a spike in shoplifting as the young people who were being exploited often owed them money.

A member asked if there were enough officers and if they were doing enough foot patrols. Sgt Cochrane replied that in his ten years in the police this was the lowest level of officers he had seen. They were not doing foot patrols, but the PSCOs were.

Another member offered thanks for the way a paint attack on cars in his ward had been dealt with. He wondered if the Youth Council could make suggestions on how the police could engage with young people. Sgt Cochrane said he would like to attend the next Youth Council meeting.

Sgt Cochrane, Judy Niner, Colin Shone, Mr and Mrs Wilson and all but 5 members of the public left the meeting at 7.40pm.

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

County Councillor Laura Price

Cllr Price announced that each County Councillor would have a pot of money for community projects. The Innovation Fund had gone live – this was to support social services that had been reduced such as day centres/mental health. Mill Street had been resurfaced to a high quality. Contractors were struggling to repair potholes within the required period, although they were repairing 5,000 a week.

District Councillor Duncan Enright

Cllr Enright reported that the Local Plan was coming on stream and should be in place at the end of May/start of June. At the recent Budget Meeting it had been resolved to talk to OCC about working together and there had been meeting between the two Chief Executives.

District Councillor Peter Dorward

Cllr Dorward had no updates to offer that would not be provided by other members.

District Councillor Toby Morris

Cllr Morris said that a business plan for joint working had gone to all 5 partner councils. The idea was to deliver good or better services and make efficiency services. The grant system had changed to become more transparent. WODC no longer had councillor directors on the board of Cottsway Housing, so this was now completely independent.

County Councillor Suzanne Bartington

Cllr Bartington advised that the Housing Infrastructure Bid was big news and the Council had gone through to the second round. There was an additional £8 million allocated for Oxfordshire potholes. There were concerns around faded white lines on the roads. Bids for a new primary school were being sought. She was also looking at a path to the Windrush cemetery and a dropped kerb. She thanked the emergency planning team which had helped out when Madley Park had been flooded by a burst water main.

188 **MINUTES OF COMMITTEES AND SUB COMMITTEES**

a) **PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE – 30 JANUARY 2018, 20 FEBRUARY AND 13 MARCH 2018**

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

A member commented that he did not think that Witney Vision should be removed from the agenda as a standing item. The Vice Chairman said that he had put it on hold until after the election.

A member referred to minute no 128 – 7, which had been refused by the Town Council and advised that WODC had also refused it. However, the Council was conscious that with the rise of Air B n B and pressure on housing, things were changing and this kind of letting could be on the increase.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Planning and Development Committee of 30 January, 20 February and 13 March 2018 as detailed, be received and any recommendations therein approved.

b) **ESTATES MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE – 12 FEBRUARY 2018**

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

Cllr Enright advised that his initial should be “D” and not “C”.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Estates Management Committee of 12 February 2018 as detailed, be received and any recommendations therein approved with the correction of “C” to “D” Enright.

c) **SPORTS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE – 26 MARCH 2018**

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

Minute R139 – A member asked if there was an update on the petanque court at Madley Park. Another member who was also a member of the residents association advised that the area at French Square was being used for boules and had been for a while. Another member added that she believed the season was just about to commence.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Sports and Recreation Committee of 26 March 2018 as detailed, be received and any recommendations therein approved.

d) **COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE – 2 APRIL 2018**

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

Cllr Enright advised that his middle initial was recorded incorrectly.

A member referred to minute C149 (b) and asked if WOCT had the Town Council logo on yet. The Town Clerk replied that they had been written to and a logo had been supplied.

Another member referred to minute C149 (b) and advised that another bus shelter would be wrapped on Wednesday.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Community Services Committee of 2 April 2018 as detailed, be received and any recommendations therein approved, with the correction of Cllr Enright's initials to read "D S T".

e) POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE – 9 APRIL 2018

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

A member referred to minute F171 and asked if a grant application had been received by Twinning. The Town Clerk replied that it had not.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Policy & Resources Committee 9 April 2018 as detailed, be received and any recommendations therein approved.

f) WORLD WAR ONE WORKING PARTY - 12 MARCH AND 9 APRIL 2018

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

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the World War One Working Party held on 12 March and 9 April 2018 as detailed, be received and any recommendations therein approved.

g) SPECIAL SPORT AND RECREATION COMMITTEE – 23 APRIL 2018

The Chairman of the Committee gave a verbal report of the meeting held earlier that evening. She reported that three designs and quotations had been considered for the Raleigh Crescent Play Area and was pleased to report that Hags SMP were the successful contractors.

RESOLVED: that the verbal report of the meeting held earlier that evening be approved and any recommendations therein be approved.

189 **TO CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING NOTICE OF MOTION TO THE COUNCIL FROM CLLR MORRIS, AND SUPPORTED BY CLLR TEMPLE**

Cllr Morris put the following motion to Council, and explained the reasoning behind it (copy of speech attached to minutes):-

“That Witney Town Council recognises the significance of The Witney Feast in the history of our town and bestows upon it a special status as a premier event in the town and its significance be front of mind in the decisions we make. “

Cllr Temple seconded the motion. When put to the vote all members voted in favour of the motion.

A member asked if a plaque could be erected to mark the appreciation permanently. This would be referred to Community Services.

RESOLVED: that Cllr Morris' motion as detailed above be supported and adopted.

190 **TO AGREE THE MAYOR ELECT**

A member proposed Cllr Churchill as Mayor for the municipal year 2018/19. This was seconded and all but two members present voted in favour.

RESOLVED: that Cllr Churchill be declared Mayor Elect for the municipal year 2018/19.

191 **CIVIC ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Council received and considered the Mayor's report of engagements he had undertaken. Members congratulated him on an excellent year as Mayor.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted.

192 **VANDALISM REPORT**

The Council received and considered the report of the Operations and Estates Officer circulated prior to the meeting.

Concern was expressed about the deliberate vandalism at Oxlease and what action could be taken to prevent it. The Operations and Estates Officer explained that if you made the area "anti- vandal" it would effectively be non-repairable. If the vandalism continued he would contact the police.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted.

193 **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

The Council received and considered the report of the Operations and Estates Officer circulated prior to the meeting.

A member asked if West Witney Sports and Social Club could take part in future training. The Operations and Estates Officer replied that they had been invited to join but had not responded.

A member asked if the wooden shoring was being used in the cemetery yet. The Operations and Estates Officer replied that it was due for use for the first time the following day.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted.

194 **WITNEY MUSIC FESTIVAL**

The Council received and considered the application and request from the Music Festival to vary Witney Town Council's Policy for hosting events on Council land being the timings and to amend the original request that the Music Festival will now be a two day event being held

on Friday 17 August and Saturday 18 August. The Council also considered the report of the Town Clerk circulated prior to the meeting.

After some discussion members proposed that the Council agree the additional date on 17 August, the inclusion of a fair at both events and the after party on Saturday 18 August referred to as the “sponsors chill out area” governed by a TEN licence. It was also proposed that the timings of each event should be reconsidered after more information was received. 4 members abstained from voting on these proposals; the remaining members were in favour.

Another member proposed that the dates requested for 2019 – 28 and 29 June – be agreed. A member added that this weekend should be ring-fenced for the Music Festival in future years. 6 members abstained from voting and the remaining members were in favour.

A member proposed that the final event management plan should be received one month before the event, as there were likely to be last minute changes. 2 members stated that they had not seen the event plan and would not make any decision until they had done so. The Town Clerk said that she would send an electronic copy to all members. No resolution was made on the proposal.

RESOLVED:

1. that the report of the Town Clerk be noted;
2. that the Council agree the additional date on 17 August, the inclusion of a fair at both events and the after party on Saturday 18 August referred to as the “sponsors chill out area” governed by a TEN licence;
3. that the timings of each event should be reconsidered after more information was received, and deferred to Annual Council scheduled to be held on 9 May 2018;
4. that the dates requested for 2019 – 28 and 29 June – be ring-fenced for future years.

195 **COMMUNICATION FROM THE LEADER**

There was no communication to be considered.

196 **QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

There were no questions to the Leader of the Council.

197 **CORRESPONDENCE**

There was no correspondence to be considered.

198 **SEALING OF DOCUMENTS**

There were no documents to be sealed.

RESOLVED: that the seal of the Council be affixed to any documents arising from decisions taken by the meeting of this Council.

The meeting closed at 8.37pm.

Chairman

APPENDIX TO THE MINUTES

Cllr Toby Morris' Speech in Support of his proposed motion

As some of you might know, in 1202 the Bishop of Winchester was granted an annual fair at Witney (816 years ago). In 1243 (775 years ago) the new church was rededicated and the fair was then sanctioned by Henry III. It's been said this was the birth of the town of Witney as we know it today.

My motion to council today chairman, is simple: that Witney Town Council recognises the significance of the Witney Feast in the history of our town and bestows upon it a special status as a premier event in the town and its significance be front of mind in the decisions we make.

For transparency whilst reading for this motion I would like to make two points of fact: firstly the Witney Feast hasn't always been on The Leys, it moved to the Leys around 1904/05. For those interested, The Leys was bought by the then Rector the Reverend Foxley Norris in 1892 for £1,000 as a place where the people of Witney could play 'mainly games', which is why the Town Council have maintained The Leys as principally a sports field. The Town purchased it in 1920 in memory of those that lost their lives in the Great War which is why we as a council are the current legal owners. As the representative body of the town, made up of members elected by the town, I know that we all try to represent them to the best of our ability and in good faith and I think we have thus far respected Rector Norris' wishes.

The second point I noted is that the concept of two fairs in Witney is not new - in 1231 a fair was held on the eve of St Leonard (5th November) but this only ran until 1270. When I first read that Witney had a fair on 5th November that stopped, I was livid with Guy Fawkes for stealing the show but then realised that was 300 years before Mr Fawkes' indiscretion.

As members are aware, the Wilson family have organised the fair since the 1940s and I have in this chamber informed members that we are in my view lucky to have the Wilsons hold the rights to the feast. They don't consider themselves visitors to Witney, rather the custodians of our feast and they have over the past 60 years built a close bond with the Church of St Marys.

However, this motion is not intended to protect the commercial interests of anyone, rather to protect and recognise the feast of Witney. Many couples re-new their wedding vows and after 775 years I think it's time we as the representatives of the town symbolically renew our vows with the event that has been and will be in the heart and memory of every Witney resident over the past three quarters of a millennia. When the agenda came out a member commented that Witney Feast already has a special status, in all of our hearts yes, but council have never formally declared it and

this motion seeks to amend that. This motion is intended to hold the Feast up on a pedestal, but not that it has the exclusive use of the pedestal. Members may have noted a few historic references - I've used those deliberately to highlight how long Witney feast has been a part of our town. I think it is important to recognise that over a period of time a calendar item can, as I said last year, become part of the fabric of the town, which is why I worded the motion carefully to be "a" premier event rather than "the" premier event. And I don't think we need to wait for an events 775th year anniversary.

I would be happy with as little as 500th year. Chairman at this point I looked to see if at the 500th anniversary a motion was made, however I discovered that at that point Local Government had not been invented.

Finally and to sum up;

It could be said the fair has special status being the only one left sanctioned by the reigning monarch. This was however, as I hope I have highlighted, some time ago. Also as mentioned I think after some, say 100 years - on reflection I think 500 might be a little excessive - it's important that we as a Town somehow formally recognise that event because it is these events that makes the great town of Witney the best town in the world to live, bar none. This is why I am asking council to mark and recognise the Feasts 775 anniversary by supporting