

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

**Held on Monday 10 June 2019
at 7pm in the Gallery Room, Corn Exchange**

Present

Councillor: Cllr L Ashbourne (Chair)

Councillors: J Aitman R Bolger
D S T Enright J S King
T License A McMahon
R Smith O Collins (non-committee member)

Officers: Mrs Sharon Groth - Town Clerk
Mr Adam Clapton – Office Manager
Mr John Hickman - Operations and Estates Officer
Mrs Polly Inness - Communications Officer

Also present: 1 member of the public

C227 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies of absence received.

C228 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no interests declared at the meeting.

C229 ELECTION OF VICE CHAIRMAN

RESOLVED: that Cllr J Aitman be elected as Vice Chair of the committee for the ensuing municipal year.

C230 MINUTES

a) **RESOLVED:** that the Minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2019 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

b) **MATTERS ARISING:** C115 – Following a member’s question, it was advised that the Youth Council’s Easter event had been successful and raised in the region of £150.

C231 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No members of the public spoke under public participation.

C232 COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE, VISION & OBJECTIVES FOR THE MUNICIPAL YEAR

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk as circulated prior to the meeting

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report and committee vision and objectives be noted;
2. that, with the addition of support for the Youth Council and joint working with other authorities, the committee terms of reference be agreed;
- 3) that the Committee Vision and Objectives for the municipal year be kept on the agenda for the next meeting.

C233 **OPERATIONAL REPORT – PROGRESS SINCE LAST MEETING**

The Committee received the report and a verbal update on its contents from the Operations and Estates Officer.

RECOMMENDED: that the report and update be noted.

C234 **STREET FURNITURE & INFRASTRUCTURE**

The Committee received and considered three reports relating to the Council's estates and street furniture; namely a request for a memorial bench at the Leys and updates on defibrillators and trees. A request from a member of the public for a grit bin in Beech Road was also discussed.

With regard to the grit bin request, the committee were in support of the request – the bin was to be paid for by County Councillor Laura Price via her Councillor Priority Fund. Members were made aware that after initial filling of grit salt further refills would be at the cost to the Town Council. The Committee were also supportive of a request for a memorial bench at the Leys and Oxlease with a member following up the latter. The Operations and Estates Officer also advised the committee that several defibrillators had been installed on Council buildings in previous years and after an audit most had required maintenance. The committee were advised that the charities which had fundraised for them had not been aware of the ongoing maintenance cost implications and therefore neither were the Council. Moving forward a budget would need to be created for the ongoing maintenance costs as inevitably they would have to be funded by the Council. Members also heard that quotes had been received for a bat survey which would be required for a tree in St Mary's Churchyard.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that a resident request for a grit bin at Beech Road – funded by County Councillor Laura Price's Councillor Priority Fund – be agreed meaning the Town Council would be responsible for the re-filling ;
3. that a request for a memorial bench to be sited at the Leys Recreation Ground be granted and the location be delegated to the Operations and Estates Officer following a meeting with the requestor;

4. that the committee requests a budget line and annual sum for the future maintenance of the defibrillators on the Council's estates;
5. that the Council accepts the quotation for a bat survey on tree T583 in St Mary's churchyard;

C235 COMMUNITY PIANO

The Chair presented members with the idea of a Community Piano which has proved popular and successful in other parts of the country. The piano could be weatherproofed, hopefully decorated by Witney and Abingdon College if they agreed, and sited in an area of the town once the necessary permissions were obtained. Although there were some concerns regarding vandalism, taking into account there would be very limited costs to the council, the committee welcomed the proposal.

RECOMMENDED: that Officers contact Witney and Abingdon College's Arts Department, and the Woolgate Centre regarding the potential siting of the piano.

C236 COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE

The Committee received and considered the report of the Communications and Events Officer as circulated with the agenda. Members were interested in the annual survey but noted a substantial disparity in the age range of respondents with none being under eighteen, something that should be addressed in future. Members also received a draft copy of the quarterly Council newsletter prior to publication for consideration.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that a survey response document that addresses questions be published;
3. that the Town Council invests and implements Transport Layer Security for its Website;
4. that the Communications Officer works on meeting accessibility requirements for the Council's Web site and App.

C237 EVENTS REPORT

The Committee received and considered the report of the Communications and Events Officer. With regard to the Heritage Open Days, Members agreed that an event around street history ideas would be interesting and could include buildings and businesses with a walking guide based on the poppy trail of November 2018. The committee were also enthusiastic regarding the centenary of the Leys and 75th anniversary of VE Day in 2019 and discussed the possibility of combining one or both of these with the centenary of Witney Swifts Cricket Club. With regard to the Officer's report on Coffee Mornings the committee felt that these would

be an excellent way of meeting and advising Witney residents and they could be held at different days and times so that everyone would have the opportunity to attend.

The Operations and Estates Officer also updated the committee on the situation with large event hirers at the Leys. He was still awaiting documentation from LibFest and Witney Carnival organisers for their events later in the summer and had concerns regarding the weather forecast for the Witney Music Festival the following week.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that a Working Meeting is held with external groups invited to discuss the ideas for the Heritage Open Days 2019;
3. that a Working Party is created with external representation to discuss plans for the anniversaries of VE Day, The Leys Recreation Ground and Witney Swifts;
4. that the Communications & Events Officer liaises with councillors regarding the best days and times for the Town Council Coffee mornings.

C238 ARMISTICE CENTENARY POPPIES & BLANKETS

The Committee received and considered the report of the Office Manager and were in support of discharging the recommendations of the former World War One Working Party in relation to hand knitted poppies. A further quotation should be sought in order to get the books and bookmarks printed before this year's remembrance commemorations.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that a budget of £1,000 be requested of the Policy, Governance and Finance committee in order to complete this project and; subject to a further quotation being obtained, officers make the necessary arrangements for printing.

C239 CHRISTMAS COMPETITIONS IN SCHOOLS

The Committee received the report of the Project Officer in relation to the Schools' Christmas competitions and were in full agreement that these were engaging and successful projects that should continue.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that this item be noted;
2. that Primary Schools be written to with competition details.

C240 WORLD REFUGEE DAY – FLYING THE REFUGEE NATION FLAG

Members received a proposal from the Chair to fly the Refugee Nation Flag on 20th June as part of refugee awareness week. It was advised that there were six refugee families living in Witney and if the Council were to be in agreement, the Council would be the first to fly it and take the lead in supporting refugees.

RECOMMENDED: that the Refugee Nation flag, provided by the Chair, be flown from the Town Hall on Thursday 20th June from 9am.

C241 **FARMERS CLOSE GREEN SPACE**

The Committee received the report of the Town Clerk regarding the fire that had occurred adjacent to Farmers Close in June 2018. The Town Council had received an undertaking from the insurance underwriters at the time confirming a payment would be made to cover the cost of remedial hazard cleaning works. On good faith, the Council had paid for these works at its expense in order to clear the area for residents but it now appeared that there was a wrangle between two insurance companies over whether this would be paid.

RECOMMENDED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the Town Clerk writes to the Finance Director and Cllr Toby Morris at West Oxfordshire District Council regarding the situation.

C242 **FINANCE REPORT**

Members received the report of the Town Clerk who explained that this was something that committees received on a quarterly basis as part of its commitment under financial management.

RECOMMENDED: that the report be noted.

C243 **WITNEY DISTRICT TWINNING ASSOCIATION**

The committee received two sets of minutes of the Witney District Twinning Association and were advised that the Council's involvement with them constituted grant funding for room hire for their meetings and funding towards running costs. The Mayor advised that he would be visiting Unterhaching in July as part of the anniversary celebrations between the two countries.

RECOMMENDED: that the minutes be noted.

The meeting closed at 8.52pm

Chairman.