

MEETING OF WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

Held on Monday 26 June 2019

At 7pm in the Gallery Room, Corn Exchange

Present:

Councillor D Enright (Chair)

Councillors:	J Aitman	L Duncan
	L Ashbourne	V Gwatkin
	T Ashby	A McMahon
	R Bolger	A Prosser
	O Collins	R Smith
Officers:	Mrs Sharon Groth	Town Clerk
	Mrs Nicky Cayley	Democratic Services Officer
	Mr Adam Clapton	Office Manager
Others:	15 members of the public	
	PC Chris Cochrane	

282 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for their absence were received from Cllrs Butterfield, Eaglestone, Harvey, Jones and King.

283 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

284 **MINUTES**

The Council received and considered the minutes of the Annual Council meeting held on 15 May 2019.

- a) **RESOLVED:** to confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 15 May 2019 for signature by the Chairman.
- b) **MATTERS ARISING:** there were no matters arising to be discussed at the meeting.

285 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

The Council adjourned to hear presentations from Ruth Obasa in respect of the Jewins Women2Women charity, Wendy Maddison and Michael Richards on behalf of Witney Area Fairtrade Town and Mr W Wilson for Witney Feast.

At the end of the Fairtrade presentation, the Mayor was presented with a certificate for Witney as a Fairtrade Town. The meeting was then reconvened.

286 **WITNEY COMMUNITY POLICING ISSUES**

The Council welcomed PC Chris Cochrane who was in attendance to provide an update on policing in the local area. There had been a recent spate of burglaries and car thefts but broadly Witney was still the safest town in the Thames Valley Police area and crime was not actually increasing although reported crime was. Members heard that the summer was likely to bring an increase in anti-social behaviour and the police were expecting issues on The Leys and at Burwell and Madley Park. The neighbourhood teams had been tasked with prioritising burglaries, domestic violence and exploitation by the new Chief Constable.

PC Cochrane also spoke about the launch of Project 10 in schools which was a good citizen programme that was due to be presented to schools on 2 July. He also encouraged everyone to follow a new Thames Valley Police West Oxfordshire Facebook page.

A member asked how current police numbers compared with the past and PC Cochrane replied that whilst there was the same number of police, the population and demands had grown. Only 20% of their time was now spent on criminal proceedings. Another member asked if it would be wise to publicise issues such as the increase in burglaries in the local press, and PC Cochrane replied that this should be going into the press in the next two weeks.

A member asked if the Council could help in tackling the graffiti problems at Madley Park. PC Cochrane explained that there was a new PCSO for Madley Park and Cogges who was still getting to know the area. Officers patrolling had to update a database with what they had seen on their patrols. His personal feeling was that the graffiti was caused by children from within that area and whilst prosecution was not possible unless they were caught in the act, if they could ascertain the culprits they would speak to parents. He added that he was happy to have been involved in the Youth Forum and had been surprised at the results of the survey.

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

Cllr Price

Cllr Price who was in attendance gave an update of what was happening at OCC. This included: -

- The white-lining highway programme commencing and running until October
- A highway safety review of Corn Street
- Shores Green – the scoping work had now started
- Financial pressures – children’s services were still at risk
- The criteria for Youth funding had been delayed but Witney Town Council should be well placed to bid for this if the recommendation from the Youth Forum was accepted later that evening.

Cllr Enright

Cllr Enright informed the Town Council that WODC had earlier that day resolved to declare a climate emergency and had agreed to create a citizens’ assembly to look at what could be done.

The East Witney Development Area Strategy was now out for consultation and would be considered by the Town Council's Planning and Development Committee the following week.

288 **REPORT BACK FROM COUNCILLORS ON THE WORK WITH EXTERNAL BODIES WHERE THEY SERVE AS THE TOWN COUNCIL'S REPRESENTATIVE**

Cllr Liz Duncan

Cllr Duncan reported that she had attended a Twinning Committee meeting and next year would be the 30th Anniversary of the twinning of Witney with Unterhaching. There would be a big celebration in May/June next year.

The Town Band was shortly to visit Unterhaching and there were now regular bingo nights in the Corn Exchange with proceeds going to Twinning.

289 **MINUTES OF COMMITTEES AND SUB COMMITTEES**

a) **PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE – 21 MAY AND 11 JUNE 2019**

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 May and 11 June 2019 as detailed, be received and any recommendations therein approved.

b) **HALLS AND GREEN SPACES COMMITTEE – 3 JUNE 2019**

The Chairman presented these minutes in the absence of the Chairman of the Committee to Council and moved their acceptance.

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Halls & Green Spaces Committee of 3 June 2019 as detailed, be received and any recommendations therein approved with the following amendments:-

Page 4 minute H212 – “copy write” be changed to “copyright” and “Write” is changed to “Wright”.

c) **STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE – 10 JUNE 2019**

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

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the Stronger Communities Committee of 10 June 2019 as detailed, be received and any recommendations therein be approved.

d) POLICY, GOVERNANCE AND FINANCE COMMITTEE – 17 JUNE 2019 AND VERBAL REPORT OF THE SPECIAL POLICY, GOVERNANCE AND FINANCE COMMITTEE – 26 JUNE 2019

The Chairman of the Committee presented the above minutes to Council and moved their acceptance and provided a verbal update of the Special meeting held earlier that evening.

The Town Clerk referred to minute F265 and explained that this had been dealt with by a verbal report.

The Town Clerk also informed the Council that the counter offer made to Mr Wilson in the hire charge of Witney Feast had been rejected and it had been delegated to the Leader, Deputy Leader and herself to continue negotiations.

RESOLVED:

1. that the minutes of the Policy, Governance and Finance Committee of 17 June 2019 as detailed, be received and any recommendations therein approved with the title being corrected to “Policy, Governance and Finance”; and
2. that the recommendations discussed at the Special Policy and Resources Committee held earlier that evening be approved.

e) IN BLOOM SUB COMMITTEE – 12 JUNE 2019

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

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the In Bloom Sub Committee of 12 June 2019 as detailed, be received and any recommendations therein approved.

290 ACCOUNTS & AUDIT (ENGLAND) REGULATIONS 2015 – ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN (AGAR) 2018/19

The Council received and considered the report of the Town Clerk and the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2018/19. Prior to the meeting she had circulated the final Internal Audit Report for 2018/19 following the audit which took place on 20 June 2019 after the agenda had been published. Her report detailed how the Council demonstrated it had a sound system of internal control and met the criteria in Section 1 on page 4 of the AGAR.

RESOLVED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the Annual Governance Statement at Section 1 of the Annual Return for the Year ended 31 March 2019 where questions 1 to 9 were answered yes, be approved;
3. that the statement of Accounts at Section 2 of the Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2019 be approved;
4. that the unaudited Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2019 be noted.

291 **MOTIONS**

Climate Emergency - Proposed by Cllr R Bolger and seconded by Cllr R Smith

Cllr Bolger presented her motion to council as follows:-

This Council notes that:

- a) our economic system is enriching a minority while leading humanity towards climate catastrophe. Our political system is leaving many to feel powerless and excluded from the key decisions that affect them;
- b) in 2018, the world’s leading climate scientists—the IPCC—warned that humanity has only 12 years left in which to cap temperature rises at 1.5 C or face a sharply higher risk of drought, floods and heatwaves;
- c) the UK Parliament has approved a motion to declare an environment and climate emergency, and all governments (national, regional and local) have a duty to limit the negative impacts of climate breakdown;
- d) Local Governments should recognise that they cannot wait for national government to provide more money and support to reduce emissions, and commit to the ambition of carbon neutrality by 2028 at the latest;
- e) our emissions are a small proportion of our area’s CO2 emissions and that we achieve more for our environment working co-operatively than we do alone.
- f) every year, our area spends significant amounts on energy. This money goes out of the local economy to the big energy companies when we believe that it could be retained through community energy—and that community energy is a fundamentally important part of the national energy transition we are undergoing right now.

Members were asked to agree the following recommendations which were duly considered.

RESOLVED:

At a vote all members were in favour so the motion passed with the addition that all Councillors be invited to the first meeting along with young people from the town.

1. Witney Town Council joins other Councils in declaring a Climate Emergency, and commits to the vision of carbon neutrality by 2028 at the latest, and;
2. calls on Westminster to provide the necessary powers and resources to make local action on climate change easier, and;
3. explores the expansion of community energy to keep the benefits of our local energy generation in our local economy, and;
4. works with partners anchored in the area to deliver carbon reductions and grow the local economy, and;

5. holds a public meeting made up of a representative range of our community members to establish the facts and make recommendations for our council, and;
6. establish a council working party to respond to the recommendations of the public meeting and establish a strategy to act on the vision of carbon neutrality by 2028 at the latest.

Amendment to the Town Council's Constitution – Proposed by Cllr R Smith and seconded by Cllr V Gwatkin

Cllr Smith presented her motion to Council as follows:-

In order to reflect and embrace equality and diversity within Witney Town Council's structure it is proposed that in all cases where statute and legislation refers to 'Chairman', at Witney Town Council the term 'Chair' is used. Consequently, the Town Clerk is instructed to amend the Council's constitution and all documentation accordingly.

Members voted on the motion and all members were in favour.

RESOLVED: that the motion be passed.

292 **WITNEY YOUTH FORUM**

Members received and considered the report of the Town Clerk and recommendations made by the Youth Forum. All members applauded this initiative.

The Youth Forum would evolve into the new Steering Group which in turn would report into Stronger Communities Committee. The Town Clerk advised that she would bring a report to the next meeting of that Committee.

RESOLVED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the recommendations made by the Youth Forum be approved as follows:-
 - a) That Witney Town Council works with partners to sustainably fund a team to deliver a model of Detached Youth Work across the Town. This could be via in-house provision or through a commissioned service. Liaise with all relevant groups to create a strong network - for example existing place-based youth work such as Cogges, and;
 - b) Creates a steering group to include elected and co-opted community members, to develop the model for delivering Youth Work, identify outcomes and look for opportunities to grow provision. This group should include people with relevant experience of qualified Youth Work and also young people themselves, and;
 - c) Ensures that a bid is made to Oxfordshire County Council once the terms of the Youth Work Fund are announced, to support recommendation a), and;
 - d) Ensures that a bid is made to the Police and Crime Commissioner in the next

round of funding to support recommendation a).

Support

- a) Witney Partnership of Schools and Abingdon & Witney College projects to promote adolescent mental health and community engagement;
- b) Guideposts project to recruit volunteer mentors to support vulnerable families with school-age children (complementing Homestart's work with families with pre-school children);
- c) Synolos and Aspire projects to support NEETs;
- d) The work of Lucy Cullen via the OCC Children and Family Centres, supporting young people and their families impacted by drug and alcohol misuse.

Liaise with WODC

- a) Youth Forums
 - b) Community building strategies
3. that the Town Clerk brings a report back on how to proceed to the next meeting of the Stronger Communities Committee, and invites an appropriate County Councillor.

293 **NOTICE OF VACANCY – NORTH WARD**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Town Clerk as circulated with the agenda. She advised that an election had been called for the North Ward following the resignation of Mr License, and was likely to take place at the end of August. Members were not happy about the election's timing but were advised that this was in the control of WODC's Monitoring Officer. Members felt that polling cards were very important to raise awareness of the election.

RESOLVED:

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the resignation of Mr License be noted;
3. that Poll Cards be issued for the forthcoming North Ward Town Council by-election.

294 **REVIEW OF POLLING DISTRICTS**

The Council received and considered correspondence from WODC on a review of Polling Places. Members discussed Tower Hill School as a polling station and noted that to accommodate this the whole school had to close. Members wished to put forward the Congregational Church or somewhere in that vicinity forward as an alternative.

RESOLVED: that the review be noted and that the suggestion of the Congregational Church or somewhere in that vicinity be forwarded as an alternative to Tower Hill School for the Central ward be put forward to WODC.

295 **CIVIC ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Council received and considered the Mayor and Deputy Mayor's report of engagements undertaken by them as circulated at the meeting.

RESOLVED: that the report be noted.

296 **FAIRTRADE WITNEY**

Following the presentation from WAFTG (Winey Area Fair Trade Group) the Council noted the renewal of Witney's status as a Fairtrade Town.

RESOLVED: that the Council notes Witney's status as a Fair Trade Town.

297 **COMMUNICATION FROM THE LEADER**

Cllr Bolger as Leader thanked everyone – especially the new members and the public for their support since the elections.

298 **CORRESPONDENCE**

There was no correspondence to be considered.

299 **QUESTIONS TO THE LEADER**

There were no questions to the leader.

300 **SEALING OF DOCUMENTS**

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

The meeting closed at 8.40pm.

Chair