

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

**Held on Monday, 20 January 2020**

**At 6.00 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney**

**Present:**

Councillor L Ashbourne (Chair)

Councillors:	J Aitman	A McMahon
	O Collins	R Smith
	D Enright	V Gwatkin
Officers:	Nicky Cayley	Democratic Services Officer
	Adam Clapton	Office Manager
	John Hickman	Operations & Estates Officer
	Polly Inness	Communications & Events Officer
	Angus Whitburn	Compliance and Environment Officer
Others:	4 members of the public.	

SC19 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for their absence were received from Cllrs Bolger and King.

SC20 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

SC21 **MINUTES**

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2019. There were no matters arising.

**RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2019 be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

SC22 **PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

The Committee adjourned in line with standing order 42 so that the public present could address the meeting. Addressing the meeting were: -

Neil Bailey –	Earth watch
Neil Clennell –	The Wychwood Project
Olivia Thornton –	local resident

Following the addresses the Committee reconvened.

SC23 **TREES**

This item was moved up the agenda with the express permission of the Chair, so that the public present could listen to the debate.

Member discussed the offer of the tree from Extinction Rebellion and agreed to its planting at the QE2 Field, Burwell. One member of Extinction Rebellion could attend and in line with the Council's policy, no plaque would be erected.

Members had been interested to hear from both the Wychwood Project and Olivia Thornton who had requested to plant trees on Town Council property on behalf of Climate Action. It was agreed that the Climate and Biodiversity Sub Committee would be best placed to consider the proposal more and how the Council Could work with the Wychwood Project. They would be invited to attend the next meeting.

The Committee had been extremely interested in the Tiny Forest Programme by Earthwatch and agreed to progress it via a member and the Operations and Estates Officer working with them to identify suitable land as a starting point which could be reported back to Full Council.

**RESOLVED:**

- a) i) that the Council accepts the tree from Extinction Rebellion and plants it on the Burwell QE2 Field;
- ii) that 1 member of Extinction Rebellion is welcome to attend the planting of the tree;
- iii) that the Council will replace/maintain the tree in line with the Council's tree policy;
- iv) that a plaque is not provided/permitted in line with the Council's tree policy;
- v) that a book is purchased to record donated trees.
  
- b) that the completion of the survey on increasing tree cover in Oxfordshire from the Lord Lieutenant of Oxfordshire be delegated to Cllr Enright and the Operations and Estates Officer;
  
- c) that the Climate and Biodiversity Sub Committee has an agenda item on trees and considers how the Town Council can best work with groups and individuals on increasing tree cover in the town, inviting those attending the meeting to participate.
  
- d) that the Town Council supports the Tiny Forest project in principal and that the project be delegated to the Operations and Estates Officer and Cllr Gwatkin to progress this with Earthwatch prior to the Full Council meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> February.

SC24 **OPERATIONAL REPORT - PROGRESS SINCE LAST MEETING**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations and Estates Officer, providing an update on vandalism, litter bins, benches, the Welch Way Flower bed, and hedge and tree works.

**RESOLVED:** that the report be noted.

SC25 **OFFICER'S WORK PROGRAMME**

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

SC26 **REQUEST FOR ADDITIONAL BUS SHELTER**

The Committee received and considered correspondence from a resident requesting a bush shelter at the stop on Tower Hill.

**RESOLVED:**

1. that the correspondence be noted;
2. that the Committee delegates the task of looking into land ownership and a possible bench to Cllr Ashbourne and the Operations and Estates Officer;
3. that the Office Manager carries out a bus stop audit/shelter audit to be brought back to a future meeting of this committee.

SC27 **BUS SHELTER ARTWORK FOR BURWELL DRIVE AND CORN STREET**

SC28 **COMMUNITY PIANO ART PROJECT**

Cllr Enright provided an update on the community piano which was yet to be decorated. The SOTA Gallery had agreed to take it on for the first few months and to do a launch event. They were obtaining a quote for a bespoke trolley which would lock and negate the requirement to put the piano on and off the trolley.

The Chair added that there was a paper guide to community pianos and the Committee agreed that this should be purchased.

**RESOLVED:**

1. that the verbal update be noted;
2. that Cllr Enright would get in touch with the college to discuss the artwork being carried out and he would also follow up the piano trolley concept from SOTA;
3. that the Town Council purchases a copy of a guide to community pianos.

SC29 **COMMUNITY CLEAN UP - GRANT**

The Town Clerk had provided further information from the District Council about what type of things the Community Clean Up Grant could be spent on. The issues with bins were the capital and on-going emptying costs.

A member commented that individual groups had their own equipment and therefore it might be better to purchase items such as a jet washer that could be borrowed by groups as needed. Members were in agreement that various items could be purchased and used as a "Community Clean Up Store/Library".

**RESOLVED:** that the Town Council spends the Community Clean Up Grant on a Community Clean Up Store/Library for all groups to share.

SC30 **COMMUNITY SPEEDWATCH**

The Chair informed the Committee that County Councillor Laura Price had offered to fund the whole cost of the community speed watch equipment from her Councillor Priority fund which needed to be spent by the end of March. The Traffic Advisory Committee had established a task and finish group to work on the details of the scheme but this would need to come under the remit of the Town Council and would involve insurance, training etc.

**RECOMMENDED:** that the Town Council purchases the community speed watch equipment through County Councillor Laura Price's Councillor Priority Fund.

SC31 **COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Events and Communications Officer.

**RESOLVED:**

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the Council switches to paperless newsletters with the exception of the spring newsletter, which should be issued and distributed by Push Start as before;
3. that the focus of the Annual Satisfaction Survey is determined by the outcome of the One Witney Survey, and if this is not possible, that the focus is Youth Services.

SC32 **COUNCIL & CIVIC EVENTS**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Events and Communications Officer, covering proposed events.

**RECOMMENDED:**

1. that the report be noted;
2. that a pantomime in the Corn Exchange should be arranged for 2020 and refreshments offered;
3. that the Mayor will meet with the Events and Communications Officer the following day to select Citizens of the Year;
4. that the Lake and Country Park Day launches a nature-based scavenger hunt leaflet for children and families – the Events and Communications Officer would contact some of the local environment and nature groups such as Berks Bucks and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust, The Lower Windrush Valley Project and the RSPB to see if they could attend and offer activities;
5. that Councillors would run a stall at Witney Carnival – ideas should be brought to the next meeting.

SC33 **EVENTS AND PITCH ONE AT THE LEYS**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations and Estates Officer, explaining the issues with using pitch one at The Leys as an events field as well as a sports pitch. The Halls and Green Spaces Committee held the previous week had acknowledged this and had voted in favour of it being used exclusively for events.

The Committee discussed this and all members voted in favour of it becoming an area just for events.

**RESOLVED:**

1. that the report be noted;
2. that Pitch One side of the Leys Recreation Ground is used solely as an events field going forward;
3. that no further events are to be held on the Leys Recreation Ground other than the existing use on the cricket side by Witney Carnival and Witney Feast;
4. that large events will not be allowed use of the Town Council's other sports pitches, which will be reserved solely for minor events i.e. play day etc. and sporting use only;
5. that the Draft Events Policy and Application documentation including changes to PLI be approved with a moderation to the Children or Vulnerable Adults policy on page 8 from "coming into direct contact" to "working unsupervised with" and the addition of a section on carbon offsetting and the requirement of a license for charity collections – this would be reviewed again at the forthcoming Policy, Governance and Finance Committee meeting;
6. that provision of an annual ground renovation rolling budget of £5,000 be made for the Leys in order to maintain the ground in an acceptable condition - this would include decompaction, over seeding as required, maintaining the grass sward and levelling uneven areas following events;
7. that the provision of re-in forced trackways to main entrance to the Events Field be agreed;
8. that the couple wishing to land a helicopter on The Leys be denied permission due to the climate emergency and also health and safety issues.

SC34 **SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER NO 48 (A)**

**RESOLVED:** that Standing Order 48 (a) be suspended to allow the meeting to continue as it had now passed two hours in length.

*Cllr Collins left the meeting at 8.05pm.*

SC35 **CHRISTMAS LIGHTS**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations and Estates Officer on the situation with the Christmas Lights contractor, the penalties due, and its offer to the Council.

**RESOLVED:**

1. that the report be noted;
2. that the Council pays the balance for the items Gala Lights did fulfil but enforces the agreed penalty clauses on missing/late items;
3. that the next Christmas Sub Committee be held between 10 – 14 February rather than 24 February in order to discuss the specification for a new Christmas Lights contract.

**SC36 WITNEY & DISTRICT TWINNING ASSOCIATION**

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the Witney and District Twinning Association held on 28 November 2019.

**RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the Witney and District Twinning Association held on 28 November 2019 be noted.

**SC37 VE DAY 75 WORKING PARTY**

The Committee received and considered the minutes of the V E Day Working Parties held on 4 November 2019 and 6 January 2019.

**RESOLVED:** that the minutes of the VE Day Working Parties held on 4 November 2019 and 6 January 2020 and the recommendations therein be agreed.

**SC38 YOUTH SERVICES WORKING PARTY**

The Chair gave a verbal update on the Youth Services Working Party held earlier that evening.

**RESOLVED:** that the verbal update be noted.

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The meeting closed at: 8.25 pm

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Chair