

# Stronger Communities

## Committee Meeting of Witney Town Council



**Monday, 15th September, 2025 at 6.00 pm**

To members of the Stronger Communities Committee - T Ashby, R Smith, G Meadows, A Bailey, D Enright, A Mubin, J Treloar and D Edwards-Hughes (and all other Town Councillors for information).

You are hereby summonsed to the above meeting to be held in the **Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney** for the transaction of the business stated in the agenda below.

### Admission to Meetings

All Council meetings are open to the public and press unless otherwise stated.

Numbers of the public will be limited, with priority given to those who have registered to speak on an item on the agenda. Any member of the public wishing to attend the meeting should contact the Committee Clerk [derek.mackenzie@witney-tc.gov.uk](mailto:derek.mackenzie@witney-tc.gov.uk) in advance.

### Recording of Meetings

Under the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 the council's public meetings may be recorded, which includes filming, audio-recording as well as photography.

As a matter of courtesy, if you intend to record any part of the proceedings, please let the Deputy Town Clerk or Committee Clerk know before the start of the meeting.

### Agenda

#### 1. Apologies for absence

To consider apologies and reasons for absence.

Committee members who are unable to attend the meeting should notify the Committee Clerk [derek.mackenzie@witney-tc.gov.uk](mailto:derek.mackenzie@witney-tc.gov.uk) **prior to the meeting**, stating the reason for absence.

**Standing Order 8(e)(v)** permits the appointment of substitute Councillors to a Committee whose role is to replace ordinary Councillors at a meeting of a Committee if ordinary Councillors of the Committee have confirmed to the Proper Officer **before** the meeting that they are unable to attend.

#### 2. Declarations of Interest

Members are reminded to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests in any items under consideration at this meeting in accordance with the Town Council's Code of Conduct.

#### 3. Minutes (Pages 4 - 9)

- a) To receive and consider the minutes of the Stronger Communities Committee held on 14 July 2025.
- b) Matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda. (Questions on the progress of any item).

4. **Public Participation**

The meeting will adjourn for this item.

Members of the public may speak for a maximum of **five minutes** each during the period of public participation, in line with Standing Order 25. Matters raised shall relate to the following items on the agenda.

5. **Finance Report**

To receive and consider the report of the R.F.O concerning the financial position of items under the remit of this Committee.

**Communications**

6. **Communications Report** (Pages 10 - 16)

The Committee received and considered the report of the Communications & Community Engagement Officer (C&CEO).

**Community Engagement**

7. **Community Engagement Report** (Pages 17 - 33)

To receive and consider the report of the Communications & Community Engagement Officer.

a) **Witney Forum Meeting Notes** (Pages 34 - 38)

To receive the notes of the Witney Forum held on 24 June 2025.

8. **Youth Services** (Pages 39 - 44)

To receive and consider the report of the Deputy Town Clerk.

9. **Youth Council Update** (Pages 45 - 50)

To receive an update on the Youth Council from the Administrative Assistant – Communications & Engagement.

10. **Christmas Tree and Event Sponsorship**

To receive and consider the report of the Project Officer.

11. **Witney Chamber of Commerce**

To receive and consider the report of the Deputy Town Clerk.

12. **West Oxfordshire Community Transport** (Pages 51 - 52)

To receive and consider a request for an increase to the Annual Grant for West Oxfordshire Community Transport (WOCT).

**Street Furniture & Infrastructure**

13. **Winter Preparations** (Page 53)

To receive further requests for salt bins. (Minute SC417 Stronger Communities 14 July 2025 relates)

## Events

14. **Third Party Events** (Pages 54 - 56)

To receive and consider the report of the Venue & Events Officer.

15. **Exclusion of Press & Public**

To consider and if appropriate, to pass the following resolution: That in accordance with section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, and as extended by Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public, including the press, be excluded from the meeting because of the confidential nature of the following business to be transacted



Town Clerk

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

**Held on Monday, 14 July 2025**

**At 6.01 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney**

**Present:**

Councillor T Ashby (Chair)

Councillors:	R Smith	A Mubin (Till 6:10pm)
	G Meadows	J Treloar
	D Edwards-Hughes	J Aitman (In place of A Bailey)
	D Enright	G Doughty (In place of A Mubin from 6:10pm)
Officers:	Sharon Groth	Town Clerk
	Adam Clapton	Deputy Town Clerk
	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer &
		Committee Clerk
Others:	None.	

**SC406 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor A Bailey with Councillor J Aitman attending as a substitute.

Additionally, Councillor A Mubin advised he would have to leave the meeting after a short period at which point Councillor G Doughty would become his substitute.

**SC407 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor T Ashby declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in the grant application submitted by Witney Buttercross Scout Group by virtue of his participation with the group as a volunteer.

Later in the meeting Councillor R Smith declared a personal, non-prejudicial interest in the grant application of Bright Futures owing to their connection with the church of which she was a Member.

There were no other declarations from Members or Officers

**SC408 MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Stronger Communities committee held on 2 June 2025 were received.

SC305 – The Chair confirmed that the amount of the Youth Services grant pot had been confirmed by Officers at £20,000.

**Resolved:**

That, the minutes of the Stronger Communities Committee held on 2 June 2025 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the chair.

**SC409 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

There was no public participation.

*At 6:10pm Cllr A Mubin left the meeting with Cllr G Doughty becoming his substitute as previously advised.*

**SC410 ANNUAL RESIDENTS SURVEY RESULTS**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk concerning the results of the resident's annual satisfaction survey which was carried out at the beginning of the year.

Members were advised that the report represented the survey results for the services under the remit of this Committee and showed the combined satisfactory and above percentages against poor ones. Previous years data was also included to help benchmark the results. The report also contained all unedited comments on the services.

The chair noted the large response from under 18-year-olds and reflected on the contributions they made, it was hoped that the changes currently underway at The Leys would have a positive impact on their comments.

It was acknowledged by Members that the Council aspires for excellence and should continue the work currently under way to improve services across the town; this included the need to promote its work to residents, such as the rolling programme of repairs to street furniture as the perception was that this was neglected.

The Chair raised the idea of a Working Party for a small number of Members to consider ways in which the Council could promote itself further, however Members wished to provide greater support to the work of the Communication & Community Engagement Officer in improving communications

Members were in agreement of a suggestion to issue a second printed newsletter at an estimated cost of £3,000. It was proposed that Witney businesses could be approached to subsidise costs however, this would need to be weighed up with the potential impact on officer time to arrange this. The Committee requested that the Communication & Community Engagement Officer look into this further and report back.

**Resolved:**

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the Communication & Community Engagement Officer research corporate sponsorship of an additional printed newsletter.

**SC411 COMMUNICATIONS REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Communications & Community Engagement Officer, and the Chair summarised the report.

A Member raised that the draft Social Media Policy did not include items that were in the previous version which he felt were important and should be carried over. The Deputy Town Clerk advised that Officers would review again along with any additional comments that Members may wish to submit ahead of an adoption of the Policy at the meeting of the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee on 21 July 2025.

Several Committee Members raised issues with the speed of the Council Website though they were appreciative of the contents of the site and the help that it provided to residents, especially the features such as the land ownership map, which helped guide queries to the Council body responsible.

**Resolved:**

That, the report and verbal updates be noted.

**SC412 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Communications & Community Engagement Officer (C&CEO).

Members welcomed the news that the Army & Air Cadets would be involved with the tidying of war memorials and thanked Officers for the notification of flag raising events which they were able to attend.

The Committee was also pleased to hear of the ongoing work with Thames Valley Police in relation to anti-social behaviour in town with a meeting taking place earlier that day between TVP and Council Officers. Members asked that TVP be approached with a request that an Officer or PCSO attend the monthly Councillor in the Café events as it was thought that this would provide additional feedback to them of other problems that arise within the town. All Members were in agreement.

Members also heard an update on the success of the visit from Le Touquet Youth Council on 8 July which had been enjoyed by all those involved, they were especially thankful of the attendance of the High Sherriff and the further engagement work he had promised.

There were also updates on the proposed climate event to be facilitated by the Council, of the recent meeting of the Witney Forum and an update from The Station, were pleased to report that funding had been achieved for their hot chocolate van project and that the Kick football events would recommence for the summer holidays after their success last year.

They were also looking at their short and longer term objectives and financial planning and would be providing details on these to the Council in an aim to secure a further service level agreement.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the report be noted and;
2. That, TVP be invited to participate in the Councillor at the Café events.

SC413 **WITNEY FORUM NOTES - 24 JUNE 2025**

The Committee received the minutes of the Witney Forum which had been attended by the Chair who expressed his enjoyment at meeting all the various organisations that participate.

**Resolved:**

That, the notes of the Witney Forum meeting on 24 June 2025 be noted.

SC414 **YOUTH COUNCIL MINUTES**

The Committee received the notes of the Youth Council meeting held on 19 June 2025.

A meeting had been scheduled for 8 July 2025 to include the attendance from Le Touquet Youth Council Members; however, the meeting did not take place due to time constraints with the other activities on the evening. The meeting would be rescheduled.

**Resolved:**

1. That, the informal notes of the Youth Council meeting held on 19 June 2025 be noted.

*During the following item – Cllr J Treloar left the meeting briefly between 6:55pm and 6:58pm*

SC415 **WITNEY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE SURVEY**

The Committee received the report of the Deputy Town Clerk which outlined the results of a report provided to the Council by Witney Chamber of Commerce (WCoC).

It was agreed that the Chair should extend an invitation personally to the Chair of WCoC in order that the Committee hear first-hand of the issues faced.

Members thanked the Officers for facilitating the survey on behalf of the Witney Chamber of Commerce and acknowledged the importance of combining the results with that gathered from the under 18's survey to create a clearer roadmap for assisting witney's business community.

It was mentioned that Witney needed to be seen as a destination and not simply a convenience town, the subject of coach parking was raised as this had been an issue over the preceding weeks and no provision existed.

In respect of the recommendation to consider the re-establishment of the Witney Forum to replace the Witney Town Partnership it was unanimously agreed that the Forum be resurrected and administered by the Town Council in order to ensure the necessary traction.

It was highlighted by a Member who was also a Councillor for West Oxfordshire District Council, that he hoped the sale of the town market rights would breathe new life and create a connection with the Marriotts shopping area; the buyer of the market had been successful in other towns where it ran markets.

In response to a Member's question it was confirmed that the project to review wayfinding around the town was also a casualty of the continued delays to the High Street and Market Square redevelopment. It was hoped that this along with a strategy to deal with the unkempt

nature of the centre, such as the flyposting of bus shelters and utility boxes could be looked at again and improvements implemented.

The Committee was encouraged to consider the importance of making a submission to the West Oxfordshire Local Plan 2041 which would highlight the need for improvement in order to support the town's business community.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, an invitation be extended by the Chair to his counterpart at Witney Chamber of Commerce to attend a meeting to discuss plans in person. And,
3. That, Officers draft a framework of how the Council can work collaboratively with WCoC for presentation at a future meeting.

**SC416 QUEEN EMMA'S DYKE COMMUNITY GARDEN**

The Committee received a verbal update from the Committee Clerk outlining that Officers were awaiting a response from the individual(s) looking to establish a community garden. Design of planters and a location had been agreed by the Operations Manager and it was now left with the community to agree responsibility for the upkeep and running.

**Resolved:**

That, Officers await the community's action with the Queen Emma's Dyke Community Garden.

**SC417 WINTER PREPARATIONS**

The Committee received and considered the report of the Operations Manager relating to grit bins across the town.

It was agreed unanimously that a bin be requested to be introduced at Springfield Oval, Members were encouraged to consider other locations within their wards so that any additional requests could be considered at the meeting of the Committee on 15 September.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, Officers submit a request to OCC for consideration of the grit bin to be sited at Springfield Oval.

*The Meeting took a short adjournment from 7:15 – 7:20pm*

**SC418 EXCLUSION OF PRESS & PUBLIC**

**Resolved:**

That in accordance with section (1(2) of the Public Bodies (admission to Meetings) Act 1960, and as extended by Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, the public, including the press, be excluded from the meeting because of the confidential nature of the following business to be transacted.

*During the following Agenda item, the following took place:*

*Cllr J Treloar left the meeting at 7:27pm and did not return.  
Cllr D Edwards-Hughes left the meeting briefly between 7:50-7:53pm*

**SC419 SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER NO 5(W)**

**Resolved:**

That, Standing Order 5(w) be suspended in order to allow the meeting to continue as it had now lasted for two hours.

**SC420 YOUTH SERVICES GRANT - EVALUATION OF APPLICATIONS**

The Committee received and considered the applications for the Youth Services Grant. Applications totalling £54,342 had been received from fourteen organisations. However, there was an allocated budget of £20,000.

It was agreed early in the discussions that the Committee would review the applications prior to a decision being taken by the Chair, Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council in conjunction with the Deputy Town Clerk at a future scheduled meeting later that week. All Members were in agreement.

However, Members spoke on the merits of each application in order to provide guidance to those delegated to make the final decision. The Committee was supportive of those organisations that provided a clear benefit to Witney residents, and noted that some of the applications had been received from organisations outside of the parish and it was agreed that a scoring system be implemented in order to assist decision making.

The Deputy Town Clerk advised the Committee that a report would be compiled for presentation to the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee on 21 July 2025 for formal agreement on the awarding of funds.

**Recommended:**

1. That, the decision of awarding the youth services grant be delegated to the Chair, Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council in conjunction with the Deputy Town Clerk and,
2. That, a proposal for the awarding of the Youth Services grant be provided to the meeting of the Policy, Governance & Finance Committee on 21 July 2025.

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The meeting closed at: 8.15 pm

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Chair

## STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE



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<b>Agenda Item:</b>	Communications Report
<b>Meeting Date:</b>	Monday, 15 September 2025
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Communications & Community Engagement Officer

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The purpose of this report is to update councillors on various communication matters.

### Background

Witney Town Council's communications need to be fit for 2025 and beyond. Effective communication will be fundamental to fulfilling the priorities of the Council's emerging Strategic plan and achieving its goals. The Communications Strategy is due for review.

The Communications & Community Engagement Officer was asked to investigate the pros, cons and costs of an additional printed Newsletter and this is also reported here.

### Current Situation

#### Communications Strategy Review

The original 2021 strategy has been reviewed and is being rewritten to reflect where actions, improvements and changes have been implemented and new practices adopted.

Analytics and external data sources have been updated. A new action plan has been generated designed to address the objectives and aims of the strategy.

While reviewing the original communications Strategy the Communications and Community Engagement officer discovered a reference to a survey that focused purely on communications as one of the questions in the 2018 Resident's Satisfaction survey. Although there was a small number of respondents it would be interesting to repeat this now across a large number of platforms and age groups and see how much has changed and to see if and how, Witney reflects the National trend of a continuing shift to digital channels. Back then respondents were asked to tick all the boxes that applied to how they found out about Town Council news. The results are shown below just for context. The Witney Gazette was a big source of news for the demographic that responded which was mostly 60+ This is reproduced below for interest.

## ***Communication Section, 2018 Resident's Satisfaction Survey 2018***

<i>Website</i>	
55.00%	88
—	
<i>Social Media</i>	
41.88%	67
—	
<i>Local Paper</i>	
56.25%	90
—	
<i>Posters</i>	
20.00%	32
—	
<i>Newsletters</i>	
29.38%	47
—	
<i>Direct Visit</i>	
1.88%	3
—	
<i>Council Minutes</i>	
3.75%	6
—	
<i>Council App</i>	
5.63%	9
—	
<i>Noticeboards</i>	
23.13%	37

*Total Respondents: 160*

The final draft of the Communications Strategy will be available for review/adoption by Councillors at the November meeting.

### **Additional Newsletter with Paid Advertising**

Introducing paid advertising into the Town Council newsletter could create a useful new income stream which might cover some or all of the cost of an additional printed issue, delivered to households in the second half of the year. It would also strengthen partnerships with local businesses and community groups. To succeed, contents need to have a local interest to residents but demonstrate value to potential advertisers.

A media kit would be needed and this is a huge task. It needs to outline the newsletter's purpose, audience profile, advertising options, pricing, and booking details. Advertisers could be secured through direct outreach, use of advertising platforms, or by offering sponsorship packages such as dedicated sections or whole-issue sponsorships. Pricing would depend on ad size, placement, and duration. The Council is at a disadvantage here in that we have no history and no client base from which to draw testimonials.

The benefits include revenue generation and stronger relationships with the business community. However, there are risks around reputational damage, community backlash over commercialisation, and the need to maintain editorial independence. All adverts would also have to comply with UK advertising standards.

Selling advertising space would place considerable strain on an already at capacity team with a risk to a smaller output of the 'hot off the press' news and community engagement posting we are currently able to achieve.

In summary, paid advertising could provide clear financial and community benefits, but careful management would be required to protect credibility and public trust.

Approximate costs are:

**Size** A4 Portrait - Endorse folded to A5

**Artwork** New artwork files supplied to [REDACTED]. Provide PDF Proof

**Text** 8pp printed 4/4 on 130gsm FSC Gloss

**Finishing** Fold, stitch, trim and endorse folded to A5

**Pricing** 15,000 £2,987.00

**Delivery** Royal Mail Door Drop to 6 Postcodes (13661 total drops) (not all delivered again this year)

Separate delivery to Windrush Place by [REDACTED] 1k copies - £144 plus VAT

The price is confirmed once copy is received and does not include design costs at £60 per hour, because we design and produce and edit in house.

### **Website**

The website newsletter page has been tidied up and now has a link to archived issues.

The Town Councils Vision and Mission statements along with the six pillars that underpin these are now on the Council page of the website.

### **Website speed**

Checks have been made at random times on the performance and speed of the Council's website. It is currently performing well and loading at a good speed. Please continue to report any drop in performance. There is a weekly update each Thursday where the site is unavailable for a short while.

### **Covid-19 Memorial**

The memorial has regrettably been subject to persistent anti-social behaviour over the summer period and the subject of its removal has been raised.

Given that the Council paid a significant sum to repair the memorial in May, this was not the preferred option of the Council when it was last discussed. Instead, discussion centred around its signage and promotion – residents didn't know where it was, what it was, and why it was important. Members may like to consider allocating a budget for improved signage or an information board. Temporary signage has been trialled. The bench does seem to be used by many, so perhaps a notice informing people that if the memorial is subjected to continuous vandalism, both it and the bench will be removed might be effective.

## **Press Coverage**

Latest press coverage information from January 2025 has been prepared by the Administrative Assistant – Communications and Engagement and is attached as **Appendix A**.

## **Impact Assessments**

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) Equality – the delivery of a further newsletter would provide information to those unable to access digital means.
- b) Biodiversity – no direct implications.
- c) Crime & Disorder – no direct implications.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – We would be printing more copies of the newsletter to give access to certain parts of the community.

## **Risk**

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

As reported above.

## **Social Value**

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates.

The addition of a second delivered paper magazine in the year would provide information on community events and initiatives, potentially allowing access to further social inclusion.

## **Financial Implications**

- The cost of printing and delivery a further newsletter is approximately £4,000, which could be recouped by sponsorship/advertising.
- Cost of improved signage for the Covid-19 memorial. If agreed, quotes would be required ahead of the next meeting.

## **Recommendations**

Members are invited to note the report and,

1. Consider repeating the 2018 Communications survey and
2. Consider the pros and cons of an additional newsletter that relies on advertising sales.
3. Decide whether further messaging for the Covid-19 Memorial is worthwhile.



# WITNEY

## TOWN COUNCIL

Date	Story	Reported in	Positive	Negative	Neutral	PR Issued	Social Media Post	Enquiry Response
1.1.25	Review of the Year: Storms and Car Park with no road	Witney Gazette	Yes			No		
1.1.25	Nearly 60kg of Items Donated to Foodbank	Witney Gazette	Yes			No		
8.1.25	Witney Town Council to increase precept for 2025/26	Oxford Mail			Yes	No	<a href="https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/24839956.witney-town-council-increase-precept-2025-26/">https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/24839956.witney-town-council-increase-precept-2025-26/</a>	
22.1.25	Unsafe' Pitch Playable Again	Witney Gazette			Yes	No	<a href="https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/24857630.oxfordshire-football-pitch-declared-unsafe/">https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/24857630.oxfordshire-football-pitch-declared-unsafe/</a>	
19.2.25	Upgrades to Town's Splash Park Due 'Soon'	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail	Yes			No	<a href="https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/24940283.refurbishment-witney-splash-park-happens-soon/">https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/24940283.refurbishment-witney-splash-park-happens-soon/</a>	
16.3.25	Dragonfly area in Witney Lake and Country Park restored	Oxford Mail	Yes			No	<a href="https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25003217.dragonfly-area-witney-lake-country-park-restored/">https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25003217.dragonfly-area-witney-lake-country-park-restored/</a>	
2.4.25	Citizens of the Year Celebrated by Council	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail	Yes			No	<a href="https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25036590.winners-witney-citizens-year-2024-awards-announced/">https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25036590.winners-witney-citizens-year-2024-awards-announced/</a>	
2.4.25	Work to upgrade splash park begins	Witney Gazette	Yes			Yes	<a href="https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25037749.work-upgrade-splash-park-oxfordshire-town-begins/">https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25037749.work-upgrade-splash-park-oxfordshire-town-begins/</a>	
8.5.25	Don't forget... BBC South Today live from Witney (VE DAY)	BBC South Today	Yes			No	<a href="https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/live/c62xp202006t">https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/live/c62xp202006t</a>	
10.5.25	Witney Town Council to fund initiatives for young people	Oxford Mail	Yes			Yes	<a href="https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25144161.witney-town-council-fund-initiatives-benefitting-young-people/">https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25144161.witney-town-council-fund-initiatives-benefitting-young-people/</a>	
21.5.25	Twin Town Relationships Celebrated by Officials	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail	Yes			No	<a href="https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25145564.witney-celebrates-partnerships-france-german-towns/">https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25145564.witney-celebrates-partnerships-france-german-towns/</a>	

Date	Story	Reported in	Positive	Negative	Neutral	PR Issued	Social Media Post	Enquiry Response
24.5.25	Witney splash park reopens for summer after upgrades	Oxford Mail	Yes			Yes	<a href="https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25186037.oxfordshire-splash-park-reopens-summer-upgrades/">https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25186037.oxfordshire-splash-park-reopens-summer-upgrades/</a>	
28.5.25	Football Club Partnership Supporting Health	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail	Yes			Yes	<a href="https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25185174.witney-town-council-announces-witney-town-club-partnership/">https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25185174.witney-town-council-announces-witney-town-club-partnership/</a>	
28.5.25	Twin Town's Airport Honours Late Queen	Witney Gazette			Yes	No	<a href="https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25179244.witneys-french-twin-renames-airport-queen-elizabeth-ii/">https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25179244.witneys-french-twin-renames-airport-queen-elizabeth-ii/</a>	
11.6.25	Witney dog owners asked to stop pets swimming in open water	Oxford Mail			Yes	No	<a href="https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25228816.witney-dog-owners-asked-stop-pets-swimming-open-water/">https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25228816.witney-dog-owners-asked-stop-pets-swimming-open-water/</a>	
4.7.25	Witney Town Council completes cemetery improvement works	Funeral Service Times, Oxford Mail	Yes			Yes	<a href="https://www.funeralservicetimes.co.uk/news/funeral-plans/2025/07/04/witney-town-council-completes-">https://www.funeralservicetimes.co.uk/news/funeral-plans/2025/07/04/witney-town-council-completes-</a>	
7.7.25	Witney Play Area Closes Temporarily for Safety Inspections	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail			Yes	No	<a href="https://www.witneygazette.co.uk/news/25295546.witney-play-area-closes-temporarily-due-safety-">https://www.witneygazette.co.uk/news/25295546.witney-play-area-closes-temporarily-due-safety-</a>	
9.7.25	Cemetery's New Commemorative Facilities	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail	Yes			Yes	<a href="https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25280025.witney-new-commemorative-facilities-cemetery/">https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25280025.witney-new-commemorative-facilities-cemetery/</a>	
15.7.25	Leisure Project Progresses Despite 'eyesore' Row	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail			Neutral	No	<a href="https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25302271.witney-major-progress-made-padel-">https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25302271.witney-major-progress-made-padel-</a>	
23.7.25	Town Preparing to Mark 80th Anniversary of VJ Day	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail	Yes			Yes	<a href="https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25328618.witney-preparing-mark-80th-">https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25328618.witney-preparing-mark-80th-</a>	
25.7.25	Oxfordshire splash park to remain open despite hosepipe ban	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail	Yes			Yes	<a href="https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25338273.oxfordshire-splash-park-remain-open-hosepipe-ban/">https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25338273.oxfordshire-splash-park-remain-open-hosepipe-ban/</a>	
6.8.25	Anger at Poor Pitches and 'aggressive' Emails	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail		Yes		Yes (Given Information)	<a href="https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25363375.oxfordshire-club-row-council-state-pitches/">https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25363375.oxfordshire-club-row-council-state-pitches/</a>	
13.8.25	Eight youth organisations to receive share of £20k	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail	Yes			Yes	<a href="https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25379538.witney-eight-youth-organisations-receive-share-20k/">https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25379538.witney-eight-youth-organisations-receive-share-20k/</a>	
20.8.25	Oxfordshire town commemorates forgotten army at VJ Day 80	Witney Gazette, Oxford Mail	Yes			Yes	<a href="https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25398404.oxfordshire-town-commemorates-forgotten-army-vj-day-80/">https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25398404.oxfordshire-town-commemorates-forgotten-army-vj-day-80/</a>	
21.8.25	Witney: Vandals 'disrespect' Covid-19 memorial site	Oxford Mail			Yes	No	<a href="https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25408560.witney-vandals-disrespect-covid-19-memorial-site/">https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25408560.witney-vandals-disrespect-covid-19-memorial-site/</a>	
23.8.25	Witney football pitches being prepared for new season	Oxford Mail	Yes			No	<a href="https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25410635.witney-football-pitches-prepared-new-season/">https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25410635.witney-football-pitches-prepared-new-season/</a>	
30.8.25	Witney bus users to learn about possible changes to services	Oxford Mail	Yes			No	<a href="https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25410635.witney-football-pitches-prepared-new-season/">https://www.oxfordmail.co.uk/news/25410635.witney-football-pitches-prepared-new-season/</a>	

Date	Story	Reported in	Positive	Negative	Neutral	PR Issued	Social Media Post	Enquiry Response
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**Oxford Mail**  
**Witney Gazette**

## STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE



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<b>Agenda Item:</b>	Community Engagement Report
<b>Meeting Date:</b>	Monday, 15 September 2025
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Communications & Community Engagement Officer

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The purpose of this report is to inform Councillors about proposed projects, events and activities that will provide opportunities for engaging with the community.

### Background

There has been much in the news recently and a direct approach to Witney Town Council from a member of the public about councils making a more visible statement of their heritage and national traditions, including the display of national and local flags. For many, flag-flying is seen as a visible symbol of pride, heritage and community identity and residents are increasingly looking to their councils to reflect these values.

### Current Situation

While Witney Town Council already follows established protocols for ceremonial occasions, and frequently uses flags, there is now a wider expectation to embrace flag-flying more regularly as a way of celebrating shared traditions, national pride, celebration, or remembrance.

Brief ideas for the Council to find more occasions to display both civic and national pride are listed here and rounded out in **Appendix A** along with a general statement from Oxfordshire County Council to local councils about the approach they are taking to the current situation of spontaneous painting and placement of St George's flags.

**Witney Town Council already does a lot to celebrate the town and its history and heritage and it should publicise that, while making additional plans to expand those activities, bearing in mind that anything that is added beyond what we do each year, will require a budget.**

Ideas for WTC to support the desire to celebrate Englishness see full details (**Appendix A**)

- Flag flying and English identity heritage
- Best of English food
- Flying the Town Flag and other flags
- English Flag
- Union Flag/Jack

- Lighting up the Corn Exchange
- St George's Parade
- Corn Exchange St George themed offers
- St George Best Business Window
- Famous English Achievers
- Heritage Open Day - Street Names and Heritage
- Battle of Britain Day (see further details later in the report)

The Council's current flag-flying policy is attached as **Appendix B**

### **VJ Day 80 review**

All feedback from the VJ Day 80 events was positive. People felt that it was respectful and marked the occasion in an appropriate way. The partnership with Witney and District Museum was very successful and the Cemetery Walks led by Sonia were greatly appreciated. A chance to see inside the chapel was also a hit with visitors.

The restoration of Arthur Titherington's bench and simple rededication ceremony and the decoration of this and the War memorials were well attended and valued by those came along.

### **SSE Priority Service Register**

A representative from SSE has asked to attend the September meeting to highlight how the register works and who it is aimed at. It is a free service for vulnerable customers who may struggle without electricity during power cuts or planned outages when we are performing maintenance. Planned work, which may cause interruptions to supply, is likely to increase as work required to the UK's electricity networks to reach Net Zero takes place.

### **ASB at The Leys – Thames Valley Police Operation Just Update**

Officers have been meeting regularly with a TVP stakeholder group concerning anti-social behaviour at West Oxon hotspots – The Leys and The Dell in Carterton. With funds available, TVP have suggested holding a 'Have a Go' day at the Leys in the first half of 2026 to facilitate several sports groups and other activities for young people to try out and potentially get involved in.

In addition, TVP are seeking other projects which would reduce ASB in these areas which may be able to be funded via this initiative.

### **Reception Community Window Policy Review**

At this time annually, this Committee reviews the policy which follows this report.

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## **Remaining Community Engagement Events & Requests for 2025**

### **Battle of Britain 85<sup>th</sup> Anniversary – 15<sup>th</sup> September 2025 (and beyond)**

This anniversary is not one the Town Council typically marks with large-scale activity. However, given it is a key milestone, and in keeping with the theme of celebrating all things British, which will be discussed at the Stronger Communities Committee that evening, we intend to mark the occasion by raising the Union Flag at the Town Hall, lighting the Corn Exchange in the evening, and sharing dedicated social media:

- Church Green Bombs Local History
- Memorial Stone Witney Aerodrome
- Local History
- WTC Commonwealth War Grave Commission commemoration walks at Tower Hill Cemetery Local History.

In light of the agenda item above, Members may like to consider including this date in the annual flag flying calendar.

### **International Car Free Day – 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2025**

All online – plans are for a single, comprehensive post this year.

### **Witney Town Council Eco-Fair – Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> October 2025**

Plans for this event are well underway and a press release will be issued shortly.

### **World Mental Health Day – Friday 10<sup>th</sup> October 2025**

Officers intend to highlight this day. The Council's MHFA's will share something internally and will post some signposting groups on Social Media to help reach residents with a general support hub and other shared MH and Wellness items on SM.

### **80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the United Nations – Friday 24<sup>th</sup> October 2025**

A suggestion has been received that the Council should celebrate this anniversary which is also International UN Day by way of a flag-raising and themed coffee morning with the following reasoning:

- It is the 80th Anniversary of the UN this year.
- It is an opportunity to celebrate women in leadership as the UN was championed and helped created by Eleanor Roosevelt.
- We have marked the end of WW2 with VE & VJ Day, considering making the Battle of Britain. These events marked those who sacrificed for peace. The UN Anniversary celebrates that peace.
- It is a chance to focus on peace building and, as we didn't mark Peacekeepers day, remember those who have served as Peacekeepers.
- We have a large peacebuilding/ex diplomatic community in Witney, and it would be a chance to involve them.
- Other local councils also mark this day - one being Chipping Norton who celebrate it each year.

### **Remembrance Sunday Museum Cemetery Walks – Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> November 2025**

Following the successful Commonwealth graves guided walk, hosted by Witney Museum, they have requested to facilitate a further guided walk at Tower Hill on the afternoon of remembrance Sunday. Their suggestion is that this is a free event with donations provided to the Museum.

As they wanted to go ahead and advertise this and it is something the Council has allowed before, officers have agreed the walk, so long as it is after all the remembrance Sunday services but the Committee should decide on whether it is acceptable to ask for donations.

### **International Men's Day – Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> November 2025**

As in previous years, the Council will support this initiative by way of social media posts on the day and will share something in support of our male colleagues. The general themes for this are:

- Making a positive difference to the wellbeing and lives of men and boys
- Raising awareness and/or funds for [charities](#) supporting men and boys' wellbeing
- Promoting a positive conversation about men, manhood and masculinity
- Togetherness ("looking out for our mates" or "making time for old mates" or making time to make new mates" or "reaching out to mates who are finding it tough")

### **Witney in Orange – 25<sup>th</sup> November – 10<sup>th</sup> December 2025**

A request has been received from a local organisation to see if the Council will support the United Nations initiative to turn the world orange in support of ending violence against women and girls. November 25<sup>th</sup> being Stop VAWG day and the 10<sup>th</sup> December being Human Rights Day.

At this stage, the request is in principle as the details have yet to be finalised but it could be akin to the Witney In Pink charity event and any funds the town council could provide. Please see the attached draft flier as **Appendix C**.

Members should note this is separate to **White Ribbon Day**, supported by the National Association of Local Councils and the town council on 25<sup>th</sup> November but should note the similar aim to raise awareness about preventing gender-based violence.

### **Christmas Light Switch On - Gallery Room – Friday 28<sup>th</sup> November 2025**

This year we once again invited young carers for this event and have had a very positive response. We just need to risk assess numbers for safety and can then issue an invitation to a specific number of people.

*"Thank you so much for getting in touch. This is such an amazing opportunity for our Young Carers and their families! It's always so wonderful when our young carers are recognised and offered experiences like this.*

*We would love to have some places for Be Free Young Carers and their family members. Many of our families often miss out on opportunities like this due to accessibility challenges, so this would be an incredible chance for them to spend quality time together and create lasting memories.*

*Please let me know how many spaces you are able to offer us and I will begin to fill them.*

*Thank you again!"*

### **Mayors Carols Service - Friday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2025**

The C&CEO has asked the church to stream this and publicise that those who cannot get there can watch from home accessibility as they did for civic VJ Day 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary service.

## **Competitions**

### **Christmas Card Competition 2025**

This usually runs from September to the end of November and is due to be advertised shortly.

### **Citizen of the Year 2025**

It is time to launch this now with a closing date at the end of December/beginning of January and a view to selecting a winner in early January. Councillors are encouraged to remind people to use the online form where possible to ensure that entries are received in good time and in a way that means they arrive directly to the right place and cannot be missed.

The guidance for submissions is as follows: <https://www.witney-tc.gov.uk/coy/#guidance>

## **Impact Assessments**

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) Equality – no direct implications but everyone should feel included in the celebrations of our heritage and sense of belonging in the town.
- b) Biodiversity
- c) Crime & Disorder – no direct implications.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency– no direct implications, but a positive impact in terms of the Witney Town Council Eco-Fair.

## **Risk**

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

## **Social Value**

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates.

Offering the Gallery Room for the Christmas Switch on this year to young carers has been much appreciated.

## **Recommendations**

Members are invited to note the report and,

1. Consider how best the Town Council can celebrate English culture and Britishness.
2. Consider incorporating the anniversary of the Battle of Britain into the regular town council flag flying calendar
3. Consider whether the Town Council should celebrate the 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the UN in the ways presented.
4. Consider the request from Witney Museum to ask for donations for a guided walk around Tower Hill cemetery on Remembrance Sunday.

5. Consider the request to help with turning Witney orange supporting stopping violence against women and girls.
6. Note the updates and potential presented engagement concerning, Witney VJ Day 80, the SSE Priority Register, ASB at The Leys, Car Free Day, WTC Eco-day, World Mental Health Day, International Men's Day, Christmas Lights switch-on, Mayor's Carol Service, Christmas Card competition and the Citizen of the Year launch.

## Appendix A

### FLAG FLYING AND ENGLISH IDENTITY HERITAGE

Witney Town Council is very supportive of people flying the Union Flag or England flag on their own property and in a well-maintained condition.

The highway – including roundabouts, pedestrian crossings, traffic lights, and lamp posts – falls under the jurisdiction of Oxfordshire County Council (OCC).

**OXFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL** has stated that:

“We are aware that roundabouts are being painted up and down the nation. On a general basis, individual judgements are made on such painting of roundabouts based purely on road safety considerations and nothing else.

Flags are being erected throughout the nation including on bridges and other highway infrastructure. OCC are currently liaising with other councils and National Highways to understand how they will be approaching the situation.

If you wish to forward your comments to OCC, the most direct way to report this is via the FixMyStreet service, which passes reports straight to the relevant team for action: <https://fixmystreet.oxfordshire.gov.uk>. You can also copy your report to your County Councillor so they are aware and can follow up on your behalf.”

### IDEAS FOR WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL

**Witney Town Council already does a lot to celebrate the town and it’s history and heritage and we should publicise that, while making additional plans to expand those activities.**

As suggested by a resident - **Best of English food**. This will need defining using the National Survey that takes place annually. It seems to be a two-horse race between, Fish and Chips and Chicken Tikka Massala Fish and chips is favourite at the moment so will depend on the current title holder at the time. The criteria is normally used to decide the wider category of Best of British food.

#### **Flying the Town Flag**

We could fly the town flag every day, apart from when that is superseded by a national or local event for which we would normally fly a different flag. We have a smallish version of the town

flag already and this would be better replaced with a bigger one that is more easily identifiable from a distance.

The town flag features Witney's heraldic crest and this demonstrates civic pride, a sense of belonging and reflects the town's history and heritage with references to glove making, the river Windrush, woollen mills etc as depicted on the heraldic crest below a Paschal lamb.



### **Social Media post -Witney Crest Heraldic Meaning**

#### **Official blazon**

**Arms :** Vert on a Fess wavy Argent between in chief a sinister Glove of the last between two Leopards' Faces each holding in the mouth a Shuttle Or and in base a representation of the Butter Cross at Witney Gold a Barrulet wavy Azure.

**Crest :** On a Wreath of the Colours upon a Mount Vert between a Crescent and a Star Or a Paschal Lamb proper.

**Motto:** 'INGENIO FLOREMUS'- With ingenuity we flourish

#### **Origin/meaning**

**The arms were officially granted on September 9, 1955.**

The white and blue wavy band on a green background represents the surrounding countryside and the River Windrush on which the town stands. For centuries Witney has been associated with blankets and in 1711 the weavers obtained a charter from Queen Anne incorporating them as a Company and Blanket Hall was built in the High Street. Here all blankets had to be taken for measuring and weighing, thus ensuring that the very high quality of the blankets was maintained.

The two leopard's faces holding shuttles are from the Blanket Makers arms, which appears beneath the one-handed clock on Blanket Hall. The glove represents the gloving industry, for which the town is also famous. At the base is the Buttercross that stands in the heart of Witney, it is said to be the base of an ancient preaching cross - of uncertain age.

The Paschal lamb was used as a device before the arms were granted and the mount on which it stands can be seen as referring to the site (known as the Mount), where the Bishops of Winchester built a palace some time between 1047 and 1070.

### **Flying the Town Flag**

There is also the opportunity to identify as part of the County of Oxfordshire. There is an official flag for Oxfordshire which is flown in Oxford on Historic County Flags Day, an annual celebration on July 23<sup>rd</sup> and St Frideswide's Day on October 18<sup>th</sup>. It has since 1949. Thame Town Council flies it for St Frideswide's Day. St Frideswide is the Patron Saint of Oxford. We don't have this flag, but it could be obtained.

Perhaps we could fly it every time a pothole is filled.

### **Other Flags**

**English Flag** Nationally we fly the flag of St George on 23<sup>rd</sup> April (also commemorating Shakespeare that day) and we fly it in support of national teams and their sporting achievements.

St George, born in Cappadocia (modern-day Turkey) and raised in Palestine is the patron saint of, or celebrated in around 25 countries cities and regions in the world.

We also fly the **Union Flag/Jack** (both are commonly used these days whether at sea or not) as a marker of our place within Great Britain as a geographical island and as a political region (UK) that also incorporates Northern Ireland.

**Union Jack/Flag** We also flag fly the Union Jack to commemorate royal, civic and national commemorations, remembrances and anniversaries.

The Town Council needs a new town flag and a St George flag too as ours is a little old and slightly weathered.

### **Lighting the Corn Exchange**

This is the only public building we currently have the ability to illuminate. We might consider lighting up the Corn Exchange in red and white or red, white and blue when appropriate and also the trees in market square when that is possible (out of nesting season).

### **Random placing of flags**

Flags attached in an ad hoc fashion to street furniture (lamp posts, bridges etc) that does not belong to WTC might invoke some liability and subsequent insurance implications. This can be checked out if that is what councillors want to facilitate. These checks and risk assessments should also be carried out if the council wishes to display flags in places it has not done before. -Reference what OCC says above about placing flags on their street furniture.

**St George's Parade** Might the Town Council be able to offer support to the scouts to bring back their St George's Day parade? A first step would be to discover what made them discontinue this in the first place.

A request to mark St George's Day was made at a previous Stronger Communities meeting and the question asked as to what ways in which people would like to see it marked, but no suggestions were received.

### **Corn Exchange St George themed offers**

Would the corn exchange offer a simple themed coffee or snack menu for St George's day? The shake shop probably already do a shake, but could be asked along with other businesses to take part too.

### **St George's Day Best Business Window**

Mayor to judge

### **Social Media post -Famous English Achievers**

We could find ways to promote the work of our fantastic architects, artists, musicians, engineers, authors etc. Perhaps working in partnership with the museum. This could link to the Heritage Open Day suggestion.

### **Heritage Open Day - Street Names and Heritage**

We previously planned to run this as a Heritage Open Day Activity in 2019. It wasn't taken up so we could try this again with more support to help with research. Full details are still available on the website link below.

Are you a local history buff? We are just launching our @heritageopenday event for 2019. The theme is #ThisIsPeoplePower. Who are the movers & shakers of times gone by commemorated by having streets in Witney named after them? We are asking residents to find out <https://www.witney-tc.gov.uk/heritage-open-day-2019-write-up-your-street/?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTAAYnJpZBExQ1BHTmhweW9IT1dWTIRHWAEEcq86xuOy>

[cMob4STBVdYfJD9GkIQhy0tpNOMa4yLyCmmE2pWcKk8JMbWVNxc aem pulN1wGX HmHF ej10JKmuA](#)

We will mount a family friendly FREE exhibition of findings in the Corn Exchange. Where do you live? Fancy researching your house or business building? Did someone notable live there? We'll include that too.

Lots of hits and tips on how to get started on our website.

### **Battle of Britain day and bombs on Church green (From the Town Clerk)**

The Battle of Britain was a major World War II campaign fought in the skies over the United Kingdom between July and October 1940. It was the first major military campaign fought entirely by air forces.

- After the fall of France, Nazi Germany attempted to gain air superiority over the Royal Air Force (RAF) as a precursor to a planned invasion of Britain (Operation Sea Lion).
- The RAF, supported by radar technology and aided by pilots from many allied nations (including Poland, Canada, New Zealand, and Czechoslovakia), resisted the Luftwaffe's large-scale bombing raids.
- Britain's successful defense prevented a German invasion and marked a turning point in the war, leading Winston Churchill to famously describe the RAF pilots as the "Few": "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few."
- The official commemoration is Battle of Britain Day, observed on 15 September, the date considered the climax of the battle.

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### **How councils can celebrate and commemorate the Battle of Britain**

Councils play a key role in keeping history alive for their communities. Here are some ways they could celebrate:

#### **Civic & Community Events**

- Parades & Services of Remembrance: Organise or support parades with veterans' groups, cadets, and local bands, followed by services at war memorials.
- Flag-raising ceremonies: Fly the RAF Ensign or Union Jack at council buildings on 15 September.
- Moments of silence or bell-ringing to mark the day.

**Education & Awareness** School programmes: Provide educational packs or host assemblies teaching children about the Battle of Britain.

- Talks & exhibitions: Invite historians, veterans, or family members of “the Few” to share stories.
- Library & museum displays: Highlight archives, wartime photos, and personal stories from local residents.

### **Community Engagement**

- Film screenings: Show documentaries or films such as *The Battle of Britain* (1969).
- Heritage trails: Map local airfields, shelters, or memorials connected to WWII.
- Art & writing competitions: Encourage young people to reflect on themes of bravery, sacrifice, and resilience.

### **Symbolic Acts**

- Lighting buildings: Illuminate landmarks in RAF blue or with themed projections.
- Planting memorial gardens with themed plaques.
- Social media campaigns: Share stories of local connections to the Battle.

### **What did happen in Witney—Later in 1940**

Although 15 September passed without incident in Witney, the town did experience an air raid later that year, specifically on the night of 21–22 November 1940:

- Two bombs struck in two key areas: Church Green and near the Eagle Brewery in the south of town [witney-tc.gov.uk+2Facebook+2](https://www.witney-tc.gov.uk+2Facebook+2).
- These bombs caused significant blast damage:
  - Homes, the grammar school, notable buildings such as the church, police station, and council offices suffered broken windows.
  - The almshouses at 28–38 Church Green were also damaged.
  - Visible remnants, like shrapnel marks on railings at Church Green, still mark the impact’s location [Will Writes Words and Stuff+15witney-tc.gov.uk+15sofo.org.uk+15](https://www.WillWritesWordsandStuff+15witney-tc.gov.uk+15sofo.org.uk+15).

So while the Battle of Britain peaked in the skies on 15 September, for Witney, the tangible impact came a couple of months later—during the early Blitz in November 1940.

### **Summary: Witney & Battle of Britain Day**

Date	Event
15 September 1940	No recorded impact on Witney; the Luftwaffe attacks focused on London
21–22 November 1940	Witney suffered two bomb strikes at Church Green and Eagle Brewery

**Social Media post** -WTC has its own You Tube interview with Derek West about the Church Green Bombs

<https://studio.youtube.com/video/EUZbet7QWG0/edit>



**Social Media post -Memorial Stone unveiling** at the old airfield attended by a former Mayor of Witney, Peter Dorward in 2018. Marking Witney Aerodrome

**Social Media post -WTC Commonwealth War Grave Commission commemoration walk at Tower Hill Cemetery.**

Includes the unmarked grave – Old Witney Gazette story about Christiansen the American airman killed at Witney Aerodrome, buried in Tower Hill Cemetery and cared for in perpetuity by the town of Witney with gratitude and remembrance of his sacrifice.

<https://www.facebook.com/WitneyTownCouncil/posts/pfbid0334E4mzFyL5WEs1WSswZuRwSJmR6bAgKgJzgoE3p5t8ZTLiq6ECectXSUfJPKw3Z9I>

## Witney Town Council

### Flag Flying & Illumination of Buildings for Events, Campaigns & Commemorations

#### Policy

##### Calendar of Events

Date	Occasion	Flag/Lighting	Agreed	Donated/Dictated by
1 <sup>st</sup> Mon in March	Commonwealth Day	Commonwealth Flag Union Flag	n/a	Council UK Gov Buildings
9 April	His Majesty's Wedding Anniversary	Union Flag	n/a	UK Gov Buildings
23 April	St George's Day	St George's Flag Union Flag	n/a	Council UK Gov Buildings
6 May	Coronation Day	Union Flag	n/a	UK Gov Buildings
1 <sup>st</sup> Sat in June	Oxford Pride (Taken as Witney Pride weekend since 2021)	Rainbow Flag	C157 – Full Council - 08.04.19	P. Hicks
2nd Sat in June	Official celebration of His Majesty's birthday	Union Flag	n/a	UK Gov Buildings
20 June	World Refugee Day	World Refugee Flag	C126 – Full Council - 08.06.20	L. Ashbourne
21 June	Birthday, Prince of Wales	Union Flag	n/a	UK Gov Buildings
End of June	Armed Forces Day	Armed Forces Flag	n/a	
17 July	Birthday, Her Majesty The Queen	Union Flag	n/a	UK Gov Buildings
3 September	Merchant Navy Day	Red Ensign	C357 – Community Services - 17.07.18	B. Churchill
8 September	His Majesty, The kings Accession	Union Flag	n/a	UK Gov Buildings
Remembrance Day	Second Sunday in November	Union Flag	n/a	UK Gov Buildings
14 November	Birthday, His Majesty The King	Union Flag	n/a	UK Gov Buildings

##### The Union Flag will also be flown:

- The day of the opening of a Session of the Houses of Parliament by His Majesty (see note 3)

These dates are subject to change so the calendar will be regularly updated

### **National Flag-Flying Notes**

1. Where a building has two or more flagpoles the appropriate national flag may be flown in addition to the union flag but not in a superior position.
2. Union Flags should be flown at full mast all day
3. Flags should be flown on this day even if His Majesty does not perform the ceremony in person.
4. If there is only one flagpole and another occasion fall on a Union Flag-flying day, the Union Flag takes precedence.
5. Where a building has two or more flagpoles, a Commonwealth Flag may be flown in addition to the Union on Commonwealth Day but not in a superior position.

### **Local Notes**

#### Witney Town Crest

The Witney Town flag is flown at any particularly poignant day for Witney Town Council or Witney at the Council's discretion.

#### Requests to fly other flags or to illuminate the Corn Exchange

Witney Town Council welcomes engagement within the Community and will consider all reasonable requests to fly a flag from the Town Hall and illuminate the Corn Exchange to mark local or national commemorations/campaigns under the following guidance.

1. Any request must be made in writing to the Council and passed by the relevant committee and/or Full Council by way of resolution.
2. The Council reserves the right to refuse any request for flag-flying or building illumination if it considers the request to be from a politically affiliated party, group or organisation or if it risks bringing the Council into disrepute. The Council must remain politically neutral and its decision on this is final.
3. The Council will not purchase flags for third parties. On a successful request, the applicant will be asked if they wish to do so and be provided the necessary sizes. The Council will acknowledge donation in its committee minutes.
4. The Council will keep any such flag safely but takes no responsibility for its long-term wear and tear or replacement.
5. The flying of flags and illumination of the Corn Exchange will usually only take effect on the day/night which corresponds to the campaign or commemoration for approximately 24 hours (dependent on appropriate staffing).

# WITNEY

## TOWN COUNCIL



### Policy Document

#### Community Window Space

Adopted: Stronger Communities Committee. Minute no:

Review Date:

- a. The window is for community use only; open to charities, groups or community organisations operating in Witney, or for the promotion of services to the benefit of Witney. No business or political organisations and all at the discretion of the Town Council (with its decision being final). Advertising for paid services is not permitted.
- b. Each let is for a two-week period. A longer booking can be discussed, again the Town Council has final discretion.
- c. There is no cost for the hire.
- d. All bookings must be made via the Town Council Reception.
- e. Groups are fully responsible for the safe setup and clearing of the space. They must ensure that individuals involved are physically able to access the space and that all setup/takedown activities follow safe working practices as outlined in the Council's Health and Safety guidance.
- f. Any display must adhere to health and safety rules; for example, no additional lighting, naked flames, aerosol cans, glass items or mirrors that may cause a fire risk. We cannot allow balloons or any items that may move about. Staff reserve the right to remove or direct the removal of any item(s) in the display that constitutes a risk to staff, members of the public and/or the building itself. All activities must comply with the Council's Community Window Space Risk Assessment and any guidance provided at the time of booking. A copy is available on request.
- g. The Community Window is located within a historic building, so the space comes with some unique measurements. The space is accessed from the rear of the window, via a step that is approx. 50cm high, this access point is 95cm wide and 176cm tall. The roof slopes down from 220cm at the back to 175cm at the front therefore a maximum height is 210cm. We strongly request that you arrange to view the space ahead of planning your display layout so that you can be sure of the dimensions.
- h. Nothing may be affixed to the window glass. We have some display equipment such as small easels of various sizes and book stands that may be of use to elevate items to eye-level which may be borrowed for the term of the display.
- i. For health and safety reasons, extra care must be taken when entering and exiting the display space, particularly due to the raised step and low ceiling height. We recommend that only individuals who are physically able to safely navigate the step and confined space

undertake the setup. Suitable footwear should be worn, and assistance should be used where needed. The Town Council accepts no responsibility for accidents or injuries sustained during access or egress. Groups must take full responsibility for the safety of anyone entering the space on their behalf. A two-step ladder is available from the Council and must be used to access the window space. It must only be used by competent individuals and checked for stability before use. A second person must always be present to assist and provide guidance while setup or takedown is in progress.

- j. In the event of an emergency, groups are responsible for ensuring that setup/takedown activities are suspended immediately and the space is evacuated safely.

***We look forward to hosting your display. If you need help with anything, please ask.***

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## STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE



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**Agenda Item:** Youth Services

**Meeting Date:** Monday, 15 September 2025

**Contact Officer:** Deputy Town Clerk

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The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on Youth Services being funded by the Town Council.

### Current Situation

#### Youth Services Grant

The Council has received signed agreements back from most grant awardees.

Unfortunately, the Friends of Springfield School have been unable to facilitate the therapeutic horse-riding sessions proposed in their application. The group is now exploring alternative, similar youth services that may be more feasible as a replacement. They have been advised any new proposal funding would be subject to the Council's discretion and cannot be guaranteed.

Following the agreement of grant allocations in July, a representative of the **Parish of Witney** asked for the parishes aims and activities to be updated with the following, which was an agreed statement on their website. They were awarded part funds for an enrichment programme.

*'Our churches share a common purpose: to help each person in our communities grow deeper in their knowledge of and relationship with God. Our vision is to be a community of mercy and kindness.'*

*We cherish the Eucharist and the Daily Office, and we are an inclusive church committed to a hospitable Christianity where everyone is welcome.*

*As an outward-looking church, we seek to demonstrate God's love through our actions. We actively engage with 11 schools, 6 nursing and care homes, and provide outreach to new housing communities and those in need throughout the area.'*

#### The Station Detached Youth

Officers met with the Project Director on 9 September 2025 and received an update on their summer programme, KICK, which was delivered at Witney ATP during the school holidays.

This year, only half of the pitch was available due to issues encountered with the booking process. However, this proved to be manageable, as attendance was lower than in 2024. The team believes this is likely because many of last year's attendees have since aged out of the target group, providing an opportunity for younger participants to take part.

In total, 94 young people attended across the summer, with approximately 25–30 participants at each session (held three days per week). Both the organisation and Thames Valley Police were pleased with this level of engagement.

As a result of these structured sessions, no additional detached youth work took place during this period. There is ongoing reflection on how the organisation's delivery model has evolved, and this will be shared in the form of a verbal update at the meeting. Officers were also updated on the leadership of the organisation and future projects.

A confidential report from The Station is attached as **Appendix A**, outlining their budget request and forward plan for future years and an updated Service Level Agreement (SLA).

BREAK – The Station has provisionally booked the café for 3 evenings in the October and February half-terms to run youth café sessions per a trial held earlier this year. It is proposed this runs along the same format, i.e. with free use of the bar, but The Station paying for wages of staff and discounted drinks from the cafe.

### **Mental Health Drop-in & We Game Sessions**

Officers have requested an update from APCAM concerning in these sessions and hope to be able to report back at the next meeting, ahead of budget setting for 2026-27.

### **Impact Assessments**

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) Equality – the provision of free to access to services.
- b) Biodiversity – no direct implications.
- c) Crime & Disorder – the provision of youth services, particularly during the summer is aimed at reducing anti-social behaviour.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – no direct implications.

### **Risk**

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

The Council must ensure it is receiving value for money in the services it commissions or any group it enters into a partnership with to mitigate against both financial and reputational risk.

## **Social Value**

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates.

The social value of services and support (via The Station's detached youth work) should be considered. Support contributes to young people being able to live fulfilling lives.

## **Financial Implications**

- If the Friends of Springfield School are not awarded their youth services grant, £2,850 will still be available.
- Funding for The Station in 2025-26 is £18,000. The report from The Station suggests an increase to this amount for 2026-27.
- A discount for drinks purchased and paid for by The Station for the BREAK sessions.

## **Recommendations**

Members are invited to note the report and,

1. Note the updates concerning the Youth Services Grant awards.
2. Consider permitting winter BREAK sessions in the Corn Exchange café, paid for by the Station.
3. Consider the report and requests from The Station for the 2026-27 fiscal year and recommend for budget-setting accordingly.

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## STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE



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<b>Agenda Item:</b>	Youth Council Update
<b>Meeting Date:</b>	Monday, 15 September 2025
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Administrative Assistant – Communications & Engagement

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The purpose of this report is to inform Councillors about the progress and work of the Witney Youth Council.

### Background

The Witney Youth Council was established in September 2024 with a group of 12 members. Since its formation, the council has actively participated in numerous town events, including the Christmas Lights Switch-on and the Witney Carnival. The primary purpose of the Witney Youth Council is to provide children and young people with a collective voice that is heard by decision makers. By giving young people a voice, the Witney Youth Council plays a vital role in shaping a more inclusive and responsive local government, encouraging active participation and developing leadership skills among Witney's young people.

### Current Situation

Several youth councillors show great enthusiasm for supporting and participating in events. However, their limited communication with one another results in insufficient time to thoroughly discuss projects and ideas. They have formed a WhatsApp group between them, but as this is formed and monitored by them, therefore we cannot be sure if all members are active or included in the group chat. There are currently 5 or 6 members that are consistent with their attendance of meetings.

Officers' approach to addressing communication challenges involves expanding the Youth Council by inviting new members. Currently, officers have received two new applications, and interviews are scheduled to take place shortly. Additionally, we are offering the option for youth members to be contacted via mobile phones through WhatsApp. Since emails don't appear to be a preferred option, WhatsApp provides a more familiar and accessible means of contact for the youth councillors. This communication method is managed by the Communications and Engagement Administrative Assistant using a work mobile. It is important to clarify that this is not a group chat but a direct messaging system, ensuring privacy and protecting confidential information.

### **High Sheriff's Breakfast**

Since the most recent Youth Council meeting in July was cancelled, the planned discussion for the High Sheriff's Big Breakfast Conversations did not take place. Consequently, Officers reached out to the High Sheriff and requested an extension for the project to hold the event in November. Further discussions on this were due to be held at a Youth Council Meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> September but was unable to be take place due to numbers.

### **Youth-led Culture Day**

This suggested event is a significant project that has yet to be successfully planned. It was intended to be an evening featuring performances, world foods, and music representing various cultures (including Britain). The event was to be organised and led by the Youth Council. As the September Youth Council meeting was due to determine whether the planning and execution of this event would proceed it is now likely that the event will be cancelled or postponed.

### **Events Survey**

The Youth Council initiated an events survey as one of their initial actions following their earlier meetings. This survey is designed to be distributed and promoted by the Youth Council to collect information on the preferences and interests of young people in Witney regarding upcoming events.

An additional question was included in the survey to assess perceptions of Anti-Social Behaviour following officer meetings with TVP, specifically whether young respondents believe it is a significant issue in their community. The survey has now been completed and will be distributed to schools through their daily slides, aiming to reach a broad audience of young people and gather valuable insights. The survey is attached as **Appendix A**.

Officers have discussed the importance of increasing the visibility of Witney Town Council as a brand among the youth of Witney. Many young residents seem to not be aware of the functions and roles of both the Witney Town Council and the Witney Youth Council. To improve awareness, a practical approach would be to distribute a monthly slide poster to local schools. This presentation would serve as a brief newsletter, featuring the council's logo and recent activities or initiatives undertaken by the youth and town council. As young people are less likely to follow the council on social media platforms, it is important to try to reach them directly through channels they frequently access, such as schools. Additionally, the youth council mentioned the daily slides as a successful source of information. This strategy aims to increase engagement and understanding of the council's work among the younger demographic, ensuring that all parts of the community are well-informed and involved.

### **Impact Assessments**

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) Equality – no direct implications.
- b) Biodiversity – no direct implications.
- c) Crime & Disorder – no direct implications.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – The Youth Council has not yet shown interest in climate initiatives. However, when they buy items for their projects, officers have prioritised sustainability and the use of eco-friendly materials.

## **Risk**

Officers recognise the potential risks associated with using WhatsApp and have developed a consent form that details the data collection and usage when employing third-party applications. Youth Councillors and their guardians retain the right to refuse the use of WhatsApp and can remain to communicate exclusively through email.

## **Social Value**

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates. Benefits provided by the above items are:

- Communication methods tailored to young people's preferences, enabling more effective collaboration.
- Organisations and local groups able to gather valuable insights on the perspectives and needs of young people in Witney through a small, representative sample.

## **Financial Implications**

- Officers' working time.
- Possible costs relating to Youth Council plans for the Corn Exchange Event.

## **Recommendations**

Members are invited to note the report and consider the following:

1. Confirmation of the use of WhatsApp as an additional form of communication (within suggested age guidelines)
2. Creation of a monthly slide newsletter for schools outlining the Council's work.



## Witney Events for Young People Survey - 2025

\* 1. Do you think Witney would benefit from more events for young people?

☐ Yes

☐ No

\* 2. Which events would you go to?

☐ Football

☐ Youth Talent Show

☐ Rugby

☐ Live Music/Bands

☐ Basketball

☐ Board Games & Puzzles

☐ Film Club

☐ Youth Club/Café

☐ Disco/party

☐ Arcade

☐ Dance (Tap-dance, breakdance, etc.)

☐ Book Club

☐ Arts & Crafts

☐ All

☐ Other (please specify)

\* 3. What is the most you would be comfortable paying for a ticket?  
(Select all that apply)

☐ £1

☐ £20

☐ £5

☐ £30

☐ £10

☐ None of the above

☐ £15

\* 4. Where do you look the most for events happening in Witney?

☐ Instagram Posts

☐ Instagram Stories

☐ Facebook

☐ Posters

☐ School Morning Notices

☐ School Noticeboards

☐ Town Noticeboards

☐ Other (please specify)

5. Anything else about events in Witney for young people?

6. Would you like to help plan the events?

☐ Yes

☐ Maybe with more information.

☐ No

## 7. Bonus Question from Thames Valley Police:

What do you think is the biggest issue in Witney when it comes to crime and anti-social behaviour (e.g. vandalism, littering, noise, intimidation)?

- Is there a **particular area** where you notice this happening the most?
- Do you have any comments or ideas to share with **Witney's neighbourhood policing team** which could help **reduce** these problems?

### Keep up with the Witney Youth Council ☐

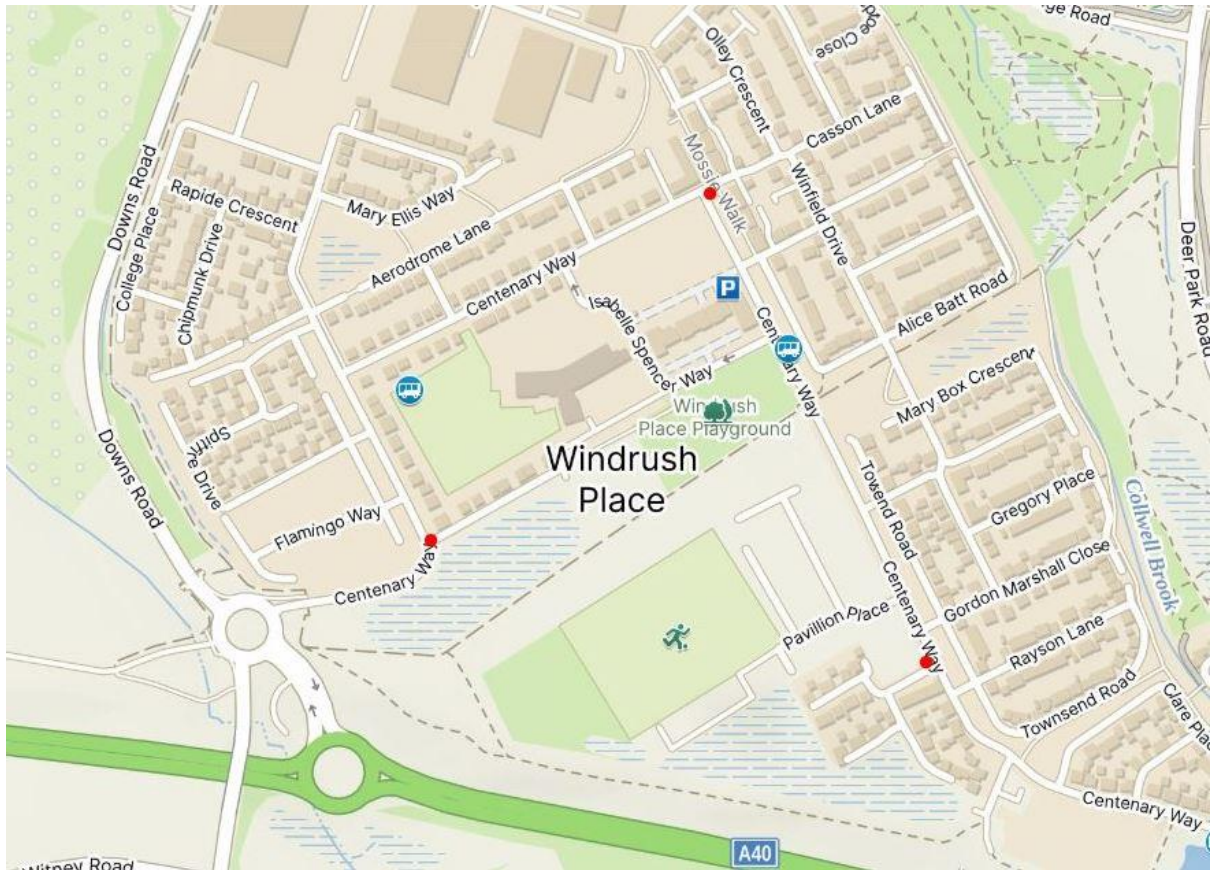
Follow us on Instagram @youthwitney and Facebook to find the latest news. You can also contact us through our email [youthcouncil@witney-tc.gov.uk](mailto:youthcouncil@witney-tc.gov.uk) if you have any ideas or are interested in getting involved!

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Officers have received the following suggested locations:

## Windrush Place

- Corner of Mott Close at Centenary Way
- Corner of Winfield Drive with Centenary Way
- On the corner of Hurricane Close with Centenary Way (near the existing bins)



## STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE



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**Agenda Item:** Third-Party Events Report

**Meeting Date:** Monday 15<sup>th</sup> September 2025

**Contact Officer:** Venue & Events Officer

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The purpose of this report is to update members on the Third-Party Events that have taken place on WTC land over the summer of 2025.

### Background

Witney Town Council facilitates a number of events throughout the year on council managed land such as The Leys, Burwell Recreation Ground and West Witney Playing Fields. Officers work with the organisers of these events to review their event plans to ensure; health and safety, licensing and legal compliance, protection from damage to our ground (through measures to limit damage and holding damage deposits) and to obtain their specific requirements for the grounds team to facilitate such as removing bollards for vehicle access etc.

Witney Town Council is also a partner of some of these events, including Witney Music Festival. Officers work in collaboration with the partner organisations by providing promotional support to help maximise the attendance of the event and to showcase the partnership between the council and the organisation.

### Current Situation

#### Past Events

- **Hatwell's Funfair – 14<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> May:** A yearly fairground event, aimed at younger children and families. This event is on a smaller scale than the Witney Feast, but still a substantial event for the town. This event was well attended this year, largely helped by the good weather that week.
- **Witney Pride – 24<sup>th</sup> May:** Witney pride hosted their third annual event at The Leys on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2025. The event began with a procession through the Town centre to the Leys, where the main event had been set up. The main event on the Leys included live music and entertainment, community groups, and food and drink vendors. The event received some positive media coverage, praising the impressive turnout.
- **Witney Music Festival – 6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup> June:** Witney Music Festival took place on The Leys on a very rainy weekend in June. Whilst the weather would've impacted the attendance numbers, the event ploughed on in good spirit. The event supported local musicians and DJ's, with the majority of the main stage acts being local bands. Officers

have arranged a full wash up meeting for 15<sup>th</sup> September with the festival directors, to review this year's performance and look ahead at improvements that will be made to next year's festival. A report for the Council (including finances has also been requested).

- **Circus Cortex – CANCELLED:** Unfortunately, this new event planned for June 2025 was cancelled by the production, along with their other dates nationally.
- **Witney Carnival – Saturday 12<sup>th</sup> July:** The carnival, which is organised by Witney Round Table, Witney Lions Club, Witney Rotary Club and the Witney Air Cadets, returned on 12<sup>th</sup> July 2025. The Carnival is the largest annual event at The Leys by land, covering both sides of the recreation ground. Officers worked closely with the organisers to ensure we can facilitate the event and that their plans for the event were safe and compliant.
- **OPA Play Day – Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> August.** The OPA Play Day ran at Burwell Recreation Ground was a successful event, well attended by families of Witney. The event was free of charge with free activities. Taken from OPA's report on the event: *"Playday is the national day for play, celebrated each year across the UK. The theme for this year's Playday is ... Spaces for Play. This year's theme highlights the vital importance of accessible, inclusive spaces where children and young people have opportunities to play freely, spending time, and connecting with friends – and feel valued as part of their community.* This a valuable event for the town and Officers will welcome them back next year.

## Upcoming Events

- **Witney Feast – 14<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> September:** Witney Feast is operating an additional day on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> September, on top of their regular Monday and Tuesday openings. The Golden Gallopers service will occur at 1pm on the Sunday, blessing the fair which celebrates the rededication of St Mary's Church. After the service, the fair will open for a special family afternoon. There will be street entertainers including jugglers, as well as music, food, drink, rides and games.
- **Circus Ginnett 27<sup>th</sup> October – 2<sup>nd</sup> November:** A popular touring circus event is returning to the leys this year.
- **Remembrance Service:** Officers are into the planning phase of this years Remembrance Service. This event is run by Officers of WTC, with involvement from local organisations. After a successfully ran event last year, there will be minimal changes to this year's event plan, with some minor adjustments to ensure things run smoothly on the day.

## Impact Assessments

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) Equality – All events should be equal and inclusive.
- b) Biodiversity – see below – environment and climate.
- c) Crime & Disorder – third party hirers should be including mitigation in their event plans.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – The Compliance & Environment Officer will be looking at third party hire and the initiatives hirers should take in relation to these areas.

## **Risk**

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

## **Social Value**

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates.

Community events such as music festivals, fairs, pride celebrations, and carnivals play a vital role in strengthening the social fabric of a town. These gatherings create inclusive spaces where people from diverse backgrounds can come together to celebrate, connect, and share experiences.

These events also encourage volunteerism and community involvement, empowering residents to actively shape their town's character.

## **Financial implications**

- The subsidised letting budget at the Leys was oversubscribed in 2025-26.
- An annual grant of £10,000 to Witney Music Festival.
- The budget for contributions towards Witney Carnival and the Christmas Lights switch on events are likely to be exceeded in the current year (decision pending).

## **Recommendations**

Members are invited to note the report and,

1. Consider increasing the subsidised lettings budget for the Leys in 2026-27 which was slightly above budget within this year.
2. Consider raising the budget of the town council's contribution to Witney Carnival for 2026-27.
3. Consider reconfirming the grant award for Witney Music festival for 2026-27 in line with the partnership agreement.