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Witney Past, Present & Future Working Party Meeting of Witney Town Council



Wednesday, 14th January, 2026 at 4.00 pm

To members of the Witney Past, Present & Future Working Party Committee - R Crouch, G Meadows, A Mubin, J Robertshaw, R Smith and J Treloar (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 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 receive apologies for absence.

Committee members who are unable to attend the meeting should notify the Committee Clerk derek.mackenzie@witney-tc.gov.uk prior to the meeting.

2. Minutes (Pages 2 - 4)

a) To adopt and sign as a correct record the minutes of the Witney: Past Present & Future Working Party meeting held on 13 November 2025.

b) Matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda (Questions on the progress any item).

3. St George's Day Events 2026 (Pages 5 - 8)

To receive and consider the report of the Communications & Community Engagement Officer on proposed events, facilitated by the Town Council, to mark St George's Day 2026.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S. J. R. C.', is positioned above the printed name of the Town Clerk.

Town Clerk

**NATIONAL PRIDE WORKING PARTY MEETING OF THE
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

Held on Thursday, 13 November 2025

At 4.00 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney

Present:

Councillor J Treloar (Chair)

Councillors:	G Meadows J Robertshaw	R Smith
Officers:	Adam Clapton Cara Murray Polly Inness Annie Hathaway	Deputy Town Clerk Admin Support Assistant - Communities & Planning Communications & Community Engagement Officer Business Administration Apprentice
Others:	One other Member	

1 ELECTION OF CHAIR

It was proposed and seconded that Councillor J Treloar be elected. There being no other nominations it was:

Resolved:

That, Councillor J Treloar be elected Chair of the Working Party for the 2025/26 municipal year.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from Councillor R Crouch.

During the following item Cllr G Meadows arrived at 4:11pm.

3 TERMS OF REFERENCE

The draft Terms of Reference were received and any amendments considered.

As this was the inaugural meeting, Members discussed whether “National Pride Working Party” was an appropriate name.

Several alternative names were proposed during the discussion. After consideration, a vote was called on adopting the name “Witney Past, Present & Future Working Party.” which was carried.

In reviewing the Terms of Reference, Members noted that reports and recommendations should be prepared for the Stronger Communities Committee in accordance with its meeting schedule. It was therefore agreed that any recommendations for St George's Day would need to be developed ahead of the 26 January 2026 meeting of Stronger Communities Committee.

Recommended:

1. That, the Working Party be named Witney Past, Present & Future Working Party, and the Terms of Reference be approved subject to the above update.
2. That, the Working Party make their recommendations for St George's Day in readiness for consideration by the Stronger Communities Committee meeting on 26 January.

4 CELEBRATING LOCAL & BRITISH VALUES

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

The Working Party discussed a range of ideas for celebrating British values and national pride throughout the year. This included early consideration of potential activities for St George's Day, such as a parade, a community football match, and events at the Corn Exchange. Members were also keen for local businesses and organisations to be involved wherever possible.

Members reviewed the proposed flag-flying arrangements, noting that the Town Flag would be flown daily, with additional flags displayed on designated national or commemorative days, such as the anniversaries of the Battle of Britain and the United Nations. During the discussion, it was identified that the NHS flag had been omitted from the draft list, and Officers confirmed this would be added. The possibility of flying the Oxfordshire flag was also raised; however, with the impending local government devolution, Members felt it would be prudent not to invest in new flags at this time.

Armed Forces Day was discussed, and Members suggested offering The Leys to local cadet groups for use as part of any commemorative activities.

For St George's Day, Members proposed that the event should also celebrate the NHS and include invitations to Witney's twin towns. While a parade was considered, Members expressed concern about the logistics and costs associated with road closures for large-scale events. It was agreed that a smaller but more impactful event focused around the Market Square and Corn Exchange would be more achievable. Suggestions included a pub quiz, Morris dancers, live music, and involvement from local groups and organisations.

Members also discussed the potential for a football tournament, possibly involving Witney Town FC and local youth groups.

It was also agreed that representatives from relevant local organisations, including Witney Museum, should be invited to future meetings to support the development of these plans.

Members then considered the report's recommendations, including a proposed budget for events in 2026. Members agreed to recommend a budget of £2,000 to the Stronger Communities Committee on 17 November 2025. All Members agreed that this was reasonable, and all were in favour.

The date of the next Working Party meeting was agreed as 14 January at 4:00pm.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, Officers update the draft flag-flying arrangements to include the NHS flag and,
3. That, a £2,000 budget for 2026 events be requested and,
4. That, The Leys be offered to local cadet groups for Armed Forces Day activities and,
5. That, the Working Party continue developing a Market Square/Corn Exchange-based St George's Day event.
6. That representatives from local organisations, including Witney Museum, be invited to future meetings,
7. That, the next meeting of the Working Party be held on 14 January at 4pm.

The meeting closed at: 4.57 pm

Chair

WITNEY: PAST PRESENT & FUTURE WORKING PARTY



Agenda Item:	St George's Day Events 2026
Meeting Date:	Wednesday, 14 January 2026
Contact Officer:	Communications & Community Engagement Officer

The purpose of this report is to update Councillors on the progress of planning events to celebrate St George's Day on 23rd April and Armed Forces Day in June 2026. The aim is to create a simple yet impactful celebration, comprising multiple smaller activities and contributions from local groups, organisations, and businesses. The intention is for these events to be repeatable each year, with minor adjustments as needed. While 2026 presents challenges in terms of location and timing, this year provides an opportunity to establish the framework and refine the approach for future celebrations.

Current Situation

Location and Date

The proposed focus is on a small, impactful event for the Market Square and Corn Exchange on Thursday 23rd April. Several logistical challenges need to be considered:

- Market Day means that the market stalls will not clear until at least 5:00 pm, limiting early access to the Square. This would limit the event to operating somewhere between 6:30 and 9:pm
- There is a long-standing booking for the Main Hall and Gallery Room of the Corn Exchange throughout the week for Buttercross Theatre, including all day on 23rd April.

These factors make it difficult to plan a Market Square-focused event that is weatherproof and flexible enough to move if rain or high winds are forecast.

Local Organisations and Businesses

Local organisations are being considered for involvement in the event:

- **Air and Army Cadets.** They can propose involvement for St George's Day if they wish to offer something on that date. *They have been written to and invited to use The Leys on Armed Forces Day for an activity of their choice.*
- **NHS** – The Council wishes to acknowledge their contribution; clarification is needed on whether this should extend to Police and Fire & Rescue services or focus solely on the NHS. Consideration needs to be given as to HOW they will be acknowledged.

- **Town Crier** has been written to – Invited to make an official cry during the event.
- **Sonia and the Museum** – Has been written to -to ascertain interest and invited to the 14th January meeting. Potential activity: Representative leading a St George's Day walk, with WTC support in providing refreshments at the 1863 Café afterwards.
- **Witney Town FC** – have been written to and invited to attend the 14th January meeting to discuss a football tournament challenge.
- **Twinned Towns** – Will be written to and invited, along with other local teams, if the football tournament idea is adopted.
- **Scouts** – have been written to -Invited to lead a litter pick; consideration needed on how the Council can support this activity.
- **Town Band** – have been written to and invited to perform; date and location to be confirmed.
- **Local businesses** – Plan to publicise to businesses via the Chamber of Commerce and social media, a "Best St George's Day window" competition.
- **Conroy Collective singers (formerly WOAPA)** have been written to and invited to perform; date and location to be confirmed.
- **Cllr Aitman** – To be contacted regarding the possibility of a post box topper by her associated group.

Additional Event Ideas and Flexibility

A range of activities could be considered that do not rely solely on the Market Square or Corn Exchange, allowing greater flexibility in planning and participation:

- 1863-themed menu and drinks – An afternoon tea could be offered, though it's likely to be very difficult due to the Buttercross Theatre booking in the Corn Exchange.
- Pub quiz – A remote quiz featuring "best guess" questions that cannot easily be cheated on. This could be circulated to pubs, care homes, and other interested organisations to encourage wider community involvement.
- St George's Day community window – A themed display running for a week, with local businesses decorating windows to celebrate the day. Large, illuminated dragon and knight
- Dragon Hunt – Businesses could participate by hosting a Dragon Hunt in their windows, engaging the public and encouraging footfall.
- Flag raising – A ceremonial flag raising will form a central, symbolic part of the celebrations along with bunting in areas where activity is taking place.

These ideas aim to spread participation across the town, engage local businesses and groups, and create a celebration that is adaptable and repeatable in future years.

Burwell Hall is available all day on 23rd April, all day on Saturday 25th and until early evening on Sunday 26th.

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 proposed projects and events aim to be inclusive and accessible to all residents, supporting equal participation across the community.

b) Biodiversity –

No direct impact on biodiversity is anticipated from these activities. Outdoor events will continue to use existing green spaces responsibly.

c) Crime & Disorder –

Community events and engagement activities promote civic pride and positive social interaction, contributing to a reduction in anti-social behaviour.

d) Environment & Climate Emergency –

Events and communications will consider environmental impact, minimising waste and promoting sustainable practices in line with the Council's Climate Emergency declaration.

Risk

Councillors should note potential risks relating to event management. Key risks include adverse weather affecting outdoor activities in the Market Square, timing conflicts with existing bookings at the Corn Exchange, and logistical challenges coordinating multiple groups and activities. Contingency plans will be required to ensure the event can proceed safely and effectively. Moving the celebrations to a day at the weekend might be sensible

Social Value

The event has the potential to strengthen community engagement by bringing together local groups, organisations, and businesses, building a sense of pride and belonging. It will also provide opportunities to celebrate public services such as the NHS, Armed Forces, and emergency services, while encouraging local participation and collaboration.

Financial Implications

All activities will be delivered within existing budgets. (£1500) Event costs and officer time will be managed to ensure best value for the community.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and:

1. Consider the updates provided and alternative events.
2. Consider alternative dates and locations.
3. Support continued collaboration with community groups such as Witney Town Band and Witney Food and Drink Festival to enhance engagement opportunities.