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Witney Past, Present & Future Working Party

Meeting of Witney Town Council



Wednesday, 18th February, 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 3 - 4)

a) To adopt and sign as a correct record the minutes of the Witney: Past Present & Future Working Party meeting held on 14 January 2026.

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

3. **St George's & Armed Forces Day Events Update** (Pages 5 - 8)

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

4. **Terms of Reference Progress Review** (Pages 9 - 11)

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

5. **Date of next meeting**

To agree the date and time of the next Working Party meeting.

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

Date of Publication 12 February 2026

**WITNEY PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE WORKING PARTY MEETING OF THE
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

Held on Wednesday, 14 January 2026

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

Present:

Councillor J Treloar (Chair)

Councillors:	R Crouch J Robertshaw	R Smith
Officers:	Adam Clapton Polly Inness	Deputy Town Clerk Communications & Community Engagement Officer
Others:	Tom Hilton Beverly Sherwood (Witney & District Museum)	

1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Witney Town FC who were unable to send a representative.

2 MINUTES

The minutes of the Witney: Past, Present & Future Working Party meeting held on 13 November 2025 were received.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Witney: Past, Present & Future Working Party meeting held on 13 November 2025 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

3 ST GEORGE'S DAY EVENTS 2026

The Working Party received a report from the Communications and Community Engagement Officer outlining initial proposals for how the Town Council could mark St George's Day 2026 following the last meeting.

Members were advised that the Corn Exchange had been booked by a third party for the period 23–26 April and therefore would not be unavailable for events; however, Burwell Hall was available. Additionally, Thursday 23 April would be a Market Day so activity on the Market Square would not be possible. It was agreed that the Corn Exchange should be booked in advance for 2027.

Members discussed the location, scope, and timing of potential events. It was agreed that activities should include a flag raising and official town cry at the Town Hall on St George's Day itself, with additional events taking place in Market Square on Sunday 26 April as they provided a central focus point. As noted at the previous meeting, the

programme should include a celebration of English institutions, such as the NHS and emergency front line services.

Further discussion considered which organisations and businesses could be involved, with several already having expressed interest. A representative from the Museum attended the meeting and confirmed that a colleague would be arranging a guided walk, potentially on 24 April. Witney Town FC also indicated enthusiasm to participate.

Members were presented with a range of potential activities, including themed items at the 1863 Café Bar, a dragon hunt, a community window display, a community football tournament over the weekend, involvement from twinned towns (including information about their patron saints), and possible re-enactments or Morris Dancers. There was agreement that resourcing the events would need to be considered, including both Councillors and volunteers.

The Working Party also discussed engagement with local schools, noting that St George's Day forms part of the curriculum. It was agreed that a creative approach should be taken and that this work could be delegated to the Chair, Cllr Crouch, and officers.

The Working Party was satisfied that plans were progressing well and that the proposals would deliver a meaningful programme to mark St George's Day for all sections of the community.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, events on Thursday 23 April 2026 should consist of a St George flag-raising and official cry at the Town Hall and,
3. That, events on Sunday 26 April 2026 should be focused on Market Square during the afternoon and include entertainment from local groups and organisations and,
4. That, a football tournament, hosted by Witney Town FC still be supported and,
5. That, integration from schools should be delegated to Cllrs J Treloar, Crouch alongside officers.

The meeting closed at: 4.54 pm

Chair

WITNEY: PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE WORKING PARTY



Agenda Item: St. Georges Day & Armed Forces Day Events Update

Meeting Date: Wednesday, 18 February 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 across three dates at the end of April, and for Armed Forces Day in June 2026.

Most activities for St George's Day have been repositioned to the weekend to allow for accessibility to more people. This approach establishes a structured but scalable model: a combination of civic ceremony, community participation, family activity, and town centre engagement. The intention remains to develop a repeatable annual framework that can evolve in future years, if desired.

Current Situation

Location and Date

Confirmed Activities

Date to be confirmed –

Community Football match/tournament -Organised and hosted by Witney Town FC

Thursday April 23rd

St George's Day Flag Raising and Town Cry

Saturday April 25th

Family Workshop organised by Witney and District Museum— Time to be confirmed

- Working idea/title is a 'make your own dragon' session

Sunday April 26th

St George's Day Walk with Sonia – Time to be confirmed

- Walk starts Market Sq – and ends ST George's chapel at St Mary's Church – focus is on the bravery of Witney people who faced their own dragons.
- Refreshments by WTC – possibly cupcakes and drink or something from 1863 – we can use tokens

Sunday April 26th - 12 noon to 4pm – individual timings to be arranged

St George's Day Family Activities

Music, food and entertainment in the Market Square which includes:

- **Music from the Witney Town Band**
- **Songs from local choir, Witney Vocals**
- **Witney Guitar Club**
- **Morris Dancing to be confirmed**
- **Food and drink stalls**
- **Celebration of our Front-Line services Police, Ambulance and Fire and Rescue**
At a given time, say 1pm, Police, Fire and NHS vehicles arrive together to music (something recognisable and upbeat and associated with each of them- played by the Town Band). They could pull onto the Market Square with blue lights on for effect (the little ones will like it) and for additional health and safety while in motion. Crews step out and are greeted with applause.

There will be an official thank you to them all for all they do for our town.

Invite the crowd to join in with applause or wave flags.

They would only need to stay for around 30 minutes or so, but for as long as they want to or can and children can explore the vehicles at this point.

Bunting for each FL service will be hung in that area of market square.

- **Witney Radio compering**
- **Display of winner's entries for school's competition, 'Witney's Dragon'**
The school's competition is an invitation for teachers to submit one piece of A3 art from each school themed – 'If Witney had a dragon, what would it look like'
- **A thank you to our scouts for their St George's Day litter pick**

Local Organisations and Businesses

Local organisations are being considered for involvement in the event:

- **Air and Army Cadets** have been written to – Invited to use The Leys on Armed Forces Day for an activity of their choice. The Mayor's cadets will be asked to join us for the flag raising and town cry if possible.
- **The Chamber of Commerce** has responded positively to being invited to take part in a best themed window or dragon trail competition

Armed Forces Day 2026

The town's local cadet forces have accepted the offer to hold an event on The Leys to mark the occasion and are now working together to organise it.

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 –

The event has been designed with a strong family focus, creating a welcoming, inclusive and community-centred atmosphere. By prioritising activities that appeal to children, parents, grandparents and carers, the programme aims to attract a broad cross-section of residents and encourage positive, intergenerational participation in a safe and celebratory environment.

- 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 that, while the programme is proportionate and community-focused, it carries standard event management risks. These include adverse weather, coordination of performers and vehicle movements, health and safety requirements, and officer capacity. Particular care will be required for the timed arrival of Police, Fire and Ambulance vehicles, with agreed routes, stewarding and risk assessments in place.

These risks will be mitigated through a clear event plan, site layout, documentation from participants, appropriate stewarding, and weather contingency arrangements. Members are asked to acknowledge and accept the residual risks associated with delivering an outdoor, multi-partner event.

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. This partnership-based model also strengthens relationships that can be built upon for future annual events and other celebrations.

Financial

All activities are intended to be delivered within the allocated £1,500 budget.

Expenditure will cover essential elements such as refreshments, event materials, display items, minor equipment hire (if required), and promotional support. Officer time will be managed within existing staffing resources.

Members are invited to note the report and:

1. Note the progress update and confirmed programme of activities.
2. Approve the proposed weekend-focused delivery model for St George's Day 2026.
3. Confirm support for the Front-Line Services recognition element, including vehicle attendance in Market Square, subject to satisfactory risk assessments and operational agreement.
4. Delegate authority to Officers, in consultation with the Chair, to finalise operational arrangements and implement necessary risk management measures.

This will enable officers to proceed with detailed planning and partner confirmations in a timely and coordinated manner.

WITNEY: PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE WORKING PARTY



Agenda Item: Terms of Reference Progress Review

Meeting Date: Wednesday, 18th February 2026

Contact Officer: Deputy Town Clerk

The purpose of this report is to invite Members of the Working Party to consider progress on the objectives of this Working Party.

Background

The terms of reference for the Working Party were agreed at its initial meeting on 13 November 2025 with the following purpose and objectives:

The purpose of this Working Party is to redefine and strengthen how Witney Town Council promotes Witney's identity locally within Oxfordshire, nationally within England and Great Britain (UK), by exploring and celebrating the town's character, heritage, and cultural significance. The Working Party will:

1. **Identify and articulate Witney's distinct identity;** its history, values, traditions, and contemporary character and how these can be expressed.
2. **Consider how to position Witney within wider contexts,** highlighting its role and relevance at county (Oxfordshire), national (England and Great Britain) level.
3. **Explore and develop initiatives that celebrate Britishness and national pride,** ensuring that local expressions of identity contribute to and reflect broader cultural narratives.
4. **Promote and celebrate culture in all its forms,** including heritage, arts, community life, and civic pride, to foster a shared sense of belonging and recognition for all residents, irrespective of their background or ethnicity.
5. **Encourage community engagement and collaboration,** ensuring that the redefinition of Witney's identity reflects the voices and aspirations of all residents, businesses, and institutions.

Current Situation

This Working Party is asked to consider progress on these objectives and to report to Witney Town Council.

1. **How can Witney Town Council express Witney's history, values, traditions, and contemporary character?**
 - Flying the Witney town crest from the Town Hall (daily apart from other designated flag flying days). Promotion on social media and in the Council's reception window (agreed)
 - Heritage Open Days. September 2026 event re: local history with Museum (agreed)

- May Fair, Witney Carnival, Witney Feast
- Remembrance Day and Citizen of the Year Awards
- Official ceremonial events

2. How can Witney Town Council highlight Witney's role and relevance at county (Oxfordshire), national (England and Great Britain) level?

- Fly the Oxfordshire flag on Oxfordshire Day and Historic Counties Day (agreed)
- Fly the Union flag on designated days to maintain significance (agreed)
- Fly England flag for St George's Day and other key sporting events for national sporting occasions (agreed)
- Fly the Council of Europe flag, Commonwealth Flag, UN flag on relevant anniversary dates
- Fly the refugee flag on World Refugee Day (agreed)
- Support for national campaigns

3. How can Witney Town Council develop initiatives that celebrate Britishness and national pride, ensuring that local expressions of identity contribute to and reflect broader cultural narratives?

- Celebrate national occasions of pride:
 - Observe and welcome Union flag-flying days at the Town Hall (agreed)
 - Battle of Britain Day, VE & VJ Days, Armistice Day – Union Flag raising (agreed)
 - St George's Day – an event to celebrate England and its valued institutions (agreed)
 - Armed Forces Day – an event at The Leys to pay tribute to our local and national armed forces groups (agreed)
 - Fly the NHS flag on its anniversary date, marking its national importance (agreed)

4. How can Witney Town Council promote and celebrate culture in all its forms, including heritage, arts, community life, and civic pride, to foster a shared sense of belonging and recognition for all residents, irrespective of their background or ethnicity?

- Meeting diverse needs
 - An inclusive and diverse Youth Council
 - Play Days & Advent Fayre – providing free family fun regardless of income
 - Community Voices Panel
 - Support for Witney Pride
 - Marking Windrush Day
 - Community Grants and support

5. How can Witney Town Council encourage community engagement and collaboration, ensuring that the redefinition of Witney's identity reflects the voices and aspirations of all residents, businesses, and institutions?

See above for some items relating to this question.

The Working Party should review the questions outlined above, offer direction on the proposed responses, and begin formulating draft statements for potential adoption by Witney Town Council as its position on these issues.

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 – Celebrating British values can enhance equality by promoting shared fairness, respect, and participation. However, without inclusive engagement, there is a risk of exclusion or alienation for minority groups. The Council must ensure that “British values” are understood as inclusive civic values that belong to everyone who calls Witney and the UK their home.
- b) Crime & Disorder – If implemented responsibly, the celebration of British values is likely to have a positive impact on crime and disorder, strengthening civic pride and shared responsibility for safety. However, without inclusive planning and pro-active management, there is a minimal risk of social tension or antisocial behaviour.
- c) Environment & Climate Emergency – Celebrating British values in Witney can have both positive and negative environmental impacts, depending on how events are organised and the sustainability of their offering.

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.

- Celebrating British values in Witney carries low to moderate risks when planned inclusively and transparently. Challenges arise around perception, inclusion, and community cohesion. However, these risks can be effectively mitigated allowing the celebration to deliver strong social, educational, and civic benefits.

Social Value

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

Celebrating British values in Witney could create social value by promoting unity, understanding, and civic pride/participation. When inclusive and sensitive, they help strengthen local identity, enhance wellbeing, and builds trust between communities. The key to maximising social value is in ensuring that any celebrations reflect the diversity, equality, and shared aspirations of residents.

Financial implications

- There are no financial implications at this point.
- Any additional events beyond the Council's current events calendar will need additional resources.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and:

1. Consider progress against the purpose and objectives of the Working Party as set out in its agreed terms of reference.
2. Recommend any further actions and draft stance to be considered by Witney Town Council.