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



Tuesday, 26th May, 2026 at 6.15 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 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 **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. 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 18 February 2026.

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

3. Events Update (Pages 5 - 8)

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

4. 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 written over a horizontal line.

Town Clerk

Date of Publication 19 May 2026

Agenda Item 2

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

Held on Wednesday, 18 February 2026

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

Present:

Councillor R Crouch (Chair)

Councillors:	G Meadows	J Robertshaw
Officers:	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
	Thomas Davies	Deputy Venue & Events Officer
	Polly Inness	Communications & Community Engagement Officer
Others:	Claire Hermon	Corn Exchange Café Manager
	Beverley Sherwood	Witney Museum

4 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors J Treloar & R Smith.

Apologies were also received from Community representatives, Paul Foster (Witney Town Football Club), Sonia Jervis (Witney Museum), Brian Conroy (Witney Vocals) and Tom Hinton (Resident).

5 MINUTES

The minutes of the Witney: Past, Present & Future Working Party meeting held on 14 January 2026 were received.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Witney: Past, Present & Future Working Party meeting held on 14 January 2026 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

6 ELECTION OF CHAIR FOR THE MEETING

With the Chair of the Committee offering his apologies it was necessary to elect a chair for the meeting.

It was proposed that Cllr R Crouch chair the meeting. All members were in agreement.

Resolved:

That, Councillor Rachel Crouch be elected Chair of the meeting.

7 **ST GEORGE'S & ARMED FORCES DAY EVENTS UPDATE**

The Working Party received a report from the Communications and Community Engagement Officer which provided updates on St George's Day and Armed Forces Day since the last meeting.

Members also received an update from the representative present from Witney Museum regarding its planned contribution. The Museum would be hosting a family friendly "Build a Dragon" event on Saturday 25 April, taking place from 10.00am to 1.00pm. The session will focus on creativity and storytelling and would be held at the Museum.

On Sunday 26 April, the Museum would also be arranging guided walks in the Market Square area. The walks would be open to all; however, advance booking was required. Should demand be high, additional walks could be arranged where possible, subject to capacity and ticket availability.

The main St George's Day activity on Sunday 26 April would be held in the Market Square. The Communications and Community Engagement Officer expressed her sincere thanks to the Events Officer for his assistance in coordinating the arrangements and providing logistical support.

The Square would host a picnic-style celebration featuring music, a compère and PA system, background entertainment and local quiz questions. A food vendor will serve traditional sausage and mash, alongside a collaboration with Smarts to offer traditional fish and chips. Witney Viking Football Team had confirmed it would host a small-scale activity.

Invitations had been extended to the Fire, Ambulance and Police Services, with confirmation of their level and type of attendance awaited. Bunting and flags would be displayed to create a celebratory atmosphere.

Members also noted details of the schools' competition. The Communications and Community Engagement Officer would be liaising with Councillor Crouch regarding the delivery of materials to schools, and the Events Officer would investigate the most appropriate way to display the selected artwork.

The newly appointed Chair of the Chamber of Commerce had expressed a strong interest in encouraging shops in the High Street and Market Square to become involved, and the Communications and Community Engagement Officer had been in contact to provide further information.

Members were advised that advertising materials were prepared and promotional activity would commence shortly.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the proposed weekend delivery model be approved.
3. That, members confirmed their support for front line service providers to be recognised and,
4. That, it be delegated to officers in consultation with the Chair to finalise the operational arrangements in order that they proceed without undue delay.

8 **TERMS OF REFERENCE PROGRESS REVIEW**

The Working Party received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk.

Members reflected on the success of the agreed objectives and the clarity they had provided in highlighting the Council's year-round activity in promoting Witney as an inclusive and welcoming place to live. It was noted that previous expressions of interest from members of the community regarding St George's Day celebrations had not yet been fully explored, and Members considered this an opportunity for further development.

In considering point 5, *"How can Witney Town Council encourage community engagement and collaboration?"*, Members recognised that while many families and residents were likely to attend the planned celebrations and events taking place from 23–26 April, there remained an opportunity to further strengthen awareness and engagement across the town.

It was therefore agreed that a post-event meeting should be arranged to reflect on the St George's Day activities and to explore additional ideas and initiatives. The meeting would provide an open forum for residents, community groups, diverse communities, businesses, shopkeepers, publicans and other local organisations to share suggestions and contribute to the continued development of activities celebrating Witney's past, present and future.

To encourage broad participation, it was agreed that the meeting be held in the early evening and be open to all who wish to attend, supporting inclusivity and reflecting the aspirations of the town.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, a post event review meeting be arranged to encourage greater community participation.

9 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Having discussed and agreed the idea of a post event review the Working Party agreed that Officers set this date to allow for a meeting to be held outside in the early evening to allow attendance from members of the community that would usually find it difficult to attend a daytime meeting.

This should be held shortly after the events arranged for 23-26 April. However, the date should be agreed ahead of the event being held so that any enquirers could be invited to attend the review meeting.

Recommended:

1. That, Officers establish a suitable weekday evening date and,
2. That, the date of the post events meeting be advertised at the events of 23-26 April 2026.

The meeting closed at: 4.52 pm

Chair

WITNEY, PAST PRESENT & FUTURE WORKING PARTY



Agenda Item: Events Update

Meeting Date: Tuesday 26 May 2026

Contact Officer: Communications & Community Engagement Officer

The purpose of this report is to update Councillors on feedback and the results of the St George's Day internal wash up meeting held on 29th April along with information from the cadets on plans for Armed Forces Day in June 2026. Staff will also be meeting later in May with members of Witney Museum to discuss how we can collaborate for Heritage Open Day in September.

Current Situation

Internal teams post event review – St George's Day event

The aim was to create a simple yet impactful celebration, comprising multiple smaller activities and contributions from local groups, organisations, and businesses that can be repeated in the future. The teams agreed that the date, venue, timing and programme of activities worked well, and staff again demonstrated flexibility in adapting to unforeseen issues on the day. For example, positioning the fire engines on the road successfully addressed space constraints caused by organisations arriving with multiple vehicles. It was noted that early arrivals prevented a full staff briefing from taking place, therefore additional setup time should be factored in for future events.

Suggestions for future improvements included:

- Expanding the performance area and including an additional performance (4 had originally been planned but this dropped to 3 when the Town Band were unavailable and we had not been able to find a suitable replacement. Some of the Frontline Services groups have choirs or bands and these would be a great inclusion.
- Ensuring all the FLS crews are invited to the stage for the Thank You as some could not see or clearly hear announcements as much as we wanted.
- Simplifying the quiz format to reduce administration, potentially by displaying answers on a board after each round. Dropping a round of the quiz and adding some audience participation games for families such as Heads and Tails and Shut the Box with prizes.
- Improving communication and running orders for the 1863 team and ensuring they have arranged adequate staffing and earlier preparation for catering operations.

- Clarifying that outdoor seating is not reserved through improved signage and repositioning tables further from speakers.

During the event there were no episodes of undesirable behaviour, first aid incidents or lost children.

Post event, public feedback indicated a high level of satisfaction with the event and comments were positive reflecting appreciation of the range and appropriateness of the activities on offer.

We had an extremely high level of commitment from all our performers and others who took part on the day. Witney and District Museum held a very successful dragon making workshop on the Saturday and Sonia led two fully sold-out walks.

Staff were pleased to see a number of councillors attending and were very grateful for the practical help with activities such as the delivery of the school's competition, the willingness to step in and help with activities at short notice, and the assistance with the clear down at the end of the day.

Of the allocated event budget of £1,000, officers spent approximately £800. Final expenditure figures will be confirmed following year-end closure and the commencement of the new financial year, when costs can be allocated accordingly. Officers are requesting that the remaining budget allocation be assigned to remaining events to cover basic costs of any materials needed.

Armed Forces Day

Saturday 29th June

Original plans were for both the Army and Air Cadets, to have military vehicles and military charity stalls, on the event side of The Leys.

However, as the circus has applied to use the main event field, the Armed Forces event arena will instead be positioned on the opposite side.

The Communications and Events Officer has proposed that they use the far corner near Courtside and within sight of The Leys War Memorial. A request has been made to the Estates and Operations teams to ensure the memorial area is cleaned, tidied and replanted in advance of the event.

Heritage Open Day

11th to 20th September

Officers will be exploring ways of collaborating with Witney and District Museum and other organisations if practical.

The theme this year is: **Everyday histories**

The butcher, the baker, the candlestick maker - what did your ancestors do? From factory floors to kitchen counters, school desks to sailors' docks, serving halls to vegetable gardens.

In 2026 we'll be exploring the daily routines of different jobs, the skills required, the people that did them and the places that housed them all.

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 associated with the planning and delivery of community events, including adverse weather affecting outdoor activities, changes to venue availability due to other bookings, and logistical challenges linked to coordinating performers, volunteers, emergency service participation and catering provision. Lessons identified from the St George's Day debrief included the need for additional setup and briefing time, clearer communication with external teams, and ensuring adequate staffing levels for catering and operational support. Appropriate planning and contingency arrangements will continue to be developed for future events.

Social Value

The events and partnership activities outlined in this report contribute positively to community cohesion, civic pride and public engagement by bringing together local organisations, volunteers, performers, community groups and public services. The positive public response to the St George's Day event demonstrated strong community appreciation for accessible, family-friendly activities and opportunities to celebrate local heritage and public service organisations. Planned collaboration with Witney and District Museum and cadet groups will further strengthen local partnerships and engagement opportunities.

Financial

The St George's Day event was delivered within the allocated budget of £1,000, with approximately £800 spent, subject to final year-end reconciliation. Officers will continue to manage future event activity within existing approved budgets and seek best value through partnership working, volunteer support and use of existing resources. Officers request that any remaining event budget allocation be retained to support associated community and heritage events during the year.

Recommendations:

Members are invited to note the report and:

1. Note the feedback and outcomes from the St George's Day event debrief.
2. Support the proposed arrangements for Armed Forces Day activities on The Leys.
3. Note the planned discussions regarding collaboration for Heritage Open Day.
4. Support continued partnership working with local organisations, community groups and volunteers to enhance future events and engagement opportunities.
5. Consider whether any remaining event budget allocation should be retained for use towards future community event activity during the current financial year.