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

Held on Wednesday, 28 October 2026

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

Present:

Councillor J Treloar (Chair)

Councillors:	R Crouch	J Robertshaw
	G Meadows	R Smith
Officers:	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
	Annie Hathaway	Admin Assistant - Communications & Engagement
	Polly Inness	Communications & Community Engagement Officer
Others:	One member of the public.	

10 **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An apology for absence was received from Councillor A Mubin.

11 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest from Members.

12 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the working party meeting held on 15 July were received.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the working party meeting held on 15 July be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

13 **EVENTS UPDATE**

The Working Party considered the report of the Community and Communications Engagement Officer and received verbal updates on the proposed events and initiatives for 2027.

School Bunting Competition.

Following the referral to the Working Party from the Stronger Communities Committee on 21 September 2026, Members welcomed the opportunity to expand the initiative and agreed in principle that the competition should be opened to all Witney primary schools.

It was considered that restricting entries to Years 5 and 6 would ensure a broadly consistent level of artistic ability and provide a fair basis for the competition; the proposal was supported whereby each participating school would select a winning design for submission. Members further agreed that Officers should approach Blake School to ascertain whether the lesson plan used to support their pupils' participation could be shared with other schools to encourage engagement and provide a consistent framework for the project.

It was further agreed that designs should be showcased through a gallery on the website although this should be anonymous to protect pupils' confidentially.

Members discussed the budgetary implications of producing the bunting, including the potential length, the number of designs that could be incorporated and the associated production costs. It was recognised that further detail would be required before a final scheme could be approved. The Working Party therefore requested that a more detailed budget breakdown be presented to Stronger Communities Committee on 16 November 2026, including indicative costs per design and for varying lengths and inclusion of design numbers.

The Working Party agreed that proposals should be developed on the basis of an indicative budget of £450.

St George's Day 2027
Members noted that the event had been successful and supported its continuation in 2027. It was agreed that the event should be delivered on a similar basis to previous years and that the £1,000 existing budget allocation was appropriate.

Big Lunch 2027
Members supported the continuation of the Big Lunch and discussed potential arrangements for the event. It was agreed that Officers should engage with Courtside Hubs regarding the preferred date, with Sunday 6 June identified as the favoured option. Consideration would need to be given to sporting fixtures taking place that weekend and any resulting impacts on the use of the site.

Members also suggested that discussions take place regarding the potential use of indoor facilities should adverse weather affect the event.

The Working Party further agreed that the proposed budget allocation of £1,000 be used to support a smaller-scale OPA Play Day style event.

RAF Brize Norton Freedom Parade
Members noted the update provided within the report regarding proposals for a Freedom Parade by RAF Brize Norton. The Working Party welcomed the continued development of plans for the event and recognised the significance of the occasion in celebrating the relationship between the Town Council, the local community and RAF Brize Norton.

Members looked forward to receiving further updates as planning progressed.

Wayfinding Map Project
Members welcomed the proposed Wayfinding Map Project and supported the development of the initiative. It was noted that further details would be brought forward once West Oxfordshire District Council had completed their procurement process.

Members also requested that the Museum be involved in the project to help ensure that elements of Witney's history and heritage were reflected within the interpretation and information included on future wayfinding boards.

Witney Town Council Calendar of Events
The Working Party noted the extensive programme of events and activities planned for 2027.

The Community and Communications Engagement Officer advised that the main OPA Play Day had inadvertently been omitted from the report and confirmed that the event would be held in August 2027, consistent with previous years.

Recommended:

1. That the arrangements and budgets proposed for St George's Day (£1,000), RAF Brize Norton Freedom Parade (£750), Wayfinding Map Project and Calendar of Events for 2027 be noted and supported,
2. That Officers proceed with planning for The Big Lunch 2027 and provision be made within the events programme and budget for a smaller-scale OPA Play Day style event within a budget of £1,000,
3. That the School Bunting Competition idea be developed by Officers and indicative costs prepared on the basis of an indicative budget of £450 to Stronger Communities Committee on 16 November 2026.

14 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Members agreed that the next meeting of the Working Party should be held in early January 2027, with the exact date to be confirmed by Officers.

Resolved:

That the next meeting of the Working Party be held in January 2027.

The meeting closed at: 4.55 pm

Chair