

STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 13 November 2023

Title: Community Engagement Report

Contact Officer: Communications & Community Engagement Officer

Background

This report is intended to inform Members of any community initiatives which the Council may wish to support. It will include an overview of suggested activities for young people and some ideas that they Youth Council (when inaugurated) might like to follow up

Current Situation

With Witney Town Council celebrating 50 years in 2024 there is plenty of scope for Community and Civic activities that could mark this. It is worth considering how each of the town council's services might be highlighted and showcased through an event that celebrates the town council, the town itself, its residents and the wide range of successful community groups and organisations Witney has.

Officers and Councillors may be able to come up with ideas relating to the services they oversee and the committees they report to or sit on. Some ideas are suggested below (in bold) within the theme of 50 or a golden anniversary.

Christmas Film for Seniors

Often the survey suggests that residents' perception is that the Council doesn't do many activities for seniors. A Christmas screening in the Corn Exchange with refreshments at a small charge that covers the cost of licensing and refreshments could be something that would be simple to implement and then hold a senior's film club on a monthly basis, either tagged on after the regular, first Thursday in the month, Chatterbox coffee morning or separately on a Friday morning. This could also be advertised to care homes, day centres or perhaps promoted as something that carers could come to with their charges.

Twinning Association

Hold a civic dinner that includes guests from our twin town and perhaps encourages others to join the TA.

Events – Showcasing Services

- **Allotments** - Best allotment as part of In Bloom awards
- **In Bloom barrows** -could have a gold theme – lots of yellow flowers are pollinator friendly
- **Cemeteries** – Rerun the very popular revealing the History of Tower Hill Cemetery as a Heritage Open Day event

- **Grants** - offer fifty grants of £50 to small community groups who would appreciate a small budget for books etc. A wide reaching but relatively small gift.
- **Lake and Country Park** – Go for gold at the lake for In Bloom next year- there will be improvements met from underspend on last year’s budget and we could create the Round the Lake Treasure Hunt leaflet previously considered. The lake is 50 years old in the next few years too.
- **Ideas to be suggested for Parks and Recreation, Climate, Biodiversity and Planning committees, and Youth Council and the services they cover.**

Community Events in the Corn Exchange

- **1970s Disco/Glam Rock Night** -An event that reflects the type of event people were attending in the 70s!
- **Mamma Mia the movie sing along screening** - Sing along screenings currently seem to be very popular and Abba are a 70s phenomenon.
- **Birthday Coffee Morning** – with cake and discounts for those turning 50 in the year.

Events for Young People

The Communications and Community Engagement Officer and Administrative Apprentice have considered some ideas for activities for young people that could run in the summer holidays. The Administrative Apprentice has put these together in the appendix for this report. As suggested earlier this year a Virtual Reality Event could prove very popular and this or some of the following activities could take place as a drop in event at something like a Youth Café or just as standalone events.

- Trainer blinging
- VR Experience
- Tee shirt printing
- Escape Room
- Scavenger Hunt
- Roller Disco
- Art Mural project for the Community
- Flower Crown workshop
- Bonfire Night and Stargazing Party
- Retro Gaming night
- Gaming tournament
- Youth Debate
- Gow in the Dark Dance
- Witney Youth Photography Competition
- Silent Disco

This could be something that the Youth Council is involved in or helps to publicise to their peers. With a new youth council in place, the Council has the opportunity to ask them to design and carry out a survey of their peers on what they might like their Youth Council to tackle, issues that are important to them, or other topics that the Youth Council, or Town Council might like to have feedback on.

Community Window

The Community Window is proving really popular, and it has been suggested by the Administration team that the duration of displays is cut from 4 weeks to two to allow twice as many groups to take advantage of the opportunity to highlight their work. Currently, it is proving difficult to fit them all in.

Citizen of the Year

This has now opened – please consider nominating worthy candidates for the following categories:

- Citizen of the Year
- Young Citizen of the Year – we always struggle with this, but we know there are fantastic young people at work in our town.
- Organisation of the Year, clubs, groups, teams etc.

Environmental impact

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 – with this in mind Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

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.

Financial implications

Described here or as stated in the report above.

- The events/grant budgets may need to be adjusted upwards to allow for additional events for the Town Council's 50th anniversary such as the £2,500 required for fifty grants of fifty pounds and other events.

Recommendations

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

1. That, Councillors consider which events they would like to hold to mark fifty years of the Town Council, and
2. That, Councillors consider nominations for the Citizen Awards and,
3. That, the Council considers doubling the opportunities for community groups to use the Community window by limiting the length of display to two weeks per group.