

D-DAY 80TH ANNIVERSARY TASK & FINISH GROUP

Notes of the Meeting held on **Monday 20 November 2023** at 4pm via Microsoft Teams

Present

Councillor R Smith (Chair)

Councillors: A Bailey J Robertshaw
 J Treloar

Officers: Deputy Town Clerk
 Communications & Community Engagement Officer

1. ELECTION OF CHAIR

Cllr R Smith was elected as Chair of the task and finish group.

2. TERMS OF REFERENCE

Members were presented with the draft terms of reference which contained the objective, timeframe and constitution. Final recommendations should be in place for approval by the Stronger Communities Committee on 18 March 2024, for the event on 6 June 2024.

Resolved:

That, the terms of reference as presented, be agreed.

3. EVENT SCOPING

Members discussed the tone of the events and felt it should be about sacrifice, loss and honour, rather than celebratory in nature.

There was agreement any events for the anniversary should be proportionate; this was the beginning of the end of the WW2 and that anniversary was due in 2025. Plans should concentrate solely on the D-Day landings and not the wider conflict.

It was also agreed the events should be local and concentrate on those from Witney who were there on the day 80 years ago and what was happening on the home front at the same time, for example, what were women doing.

Interviews, testimony and family stories should form the basis of the events to help achieve the above.- They could be collated beforehand in care homes and added to a slideshow being screened in the Corn Exchange or artwork exhibited.

There were national commemorations taking place and the town council could support these such as a Cry for Peace by the Town Crier, poems to be read out in schools, and Lamp of Peace initiative.

Civic Event

This could potentially be in the evening at the Corn Exchange along the lines of those held in 2017/18 for the anniversaries of the Somme and Passchendaele. Singing groups, such as WOAPA could be invited to perform. Members noted that Le Touquet was bombed twice as a decoy in the run up to the D-Day landings. This could be marked in some way.

There was also a suggestion that film screenings could take place at the Corn Exchange throughout the day.

Schools

It was suggested that schools could have talks on D-Day and with the help of the RBL, speak to any veterans and/or create artwork/profiles of soldiers from Witney who served to be displayed in the Corn Exchange.- It was also suggested that a trail of homes for those who served in the landings could be explored by Wood Green as they did for the anniversary of the end of WW1 in 2018.

Exhibition

As above – artwork of veterans in the Corn Exchange could be displayed. Witney Museum and the Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum may be willing to loan relevant articles. Interviews, family stories and memorabilia could also be shown.

Lamp of Peace

That centring an event around this initiative of lighting a lamp at 9.15pm be explored. A lamp and/or a human beacon (people holding electric tealights) could be created on Market Square. Lamps could be purchased and provided to local care homes to take part – Councillors may like to attend these, possibly in their wards. This could potentially be extended to schools as part of a wider project.

Church

That a multi-faith service is arranged to mark the anniversary, either in the church or at the Corn Exchange as part of a wider event.

Other Stakeholders

As well as the local volunteers and contributors, there was agreement other could be invited or asked for advice including, the Town Crier, Jeff Clements, Witney Museum representatives, Quakers, Cadets, Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum, Rev'd Toby Wright, WOAPA,

Next Meeting

Should be held before Christmas.

Recommended:

1. That, the terms of reference for the group and timeline be agreed.
2. That, the budget request for events to mark the anniversary is increased from £1,000 to £1,500.
3. That, delegation be provided to Officers to preliminary arrange the events based on the above conversation, ready for a draft timeline of events to be presented at the next meeting of the task and finish group.

The meeting closed at 5.06pm.

Chair.