

## STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

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**Date:** Monday, 18 March 2024

**Title:** Community Engagement Report

**Contact Officer:** Communications & Community Engagement Officer

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### Background

This report is intended to inform Members of any community initiatives which the Council may wish to support. Budgets were set for most events that were wanted at the end of last year, but there may be other events towards the end of this report that councillors would like to consider in the Council's 50<sup>th</sup> Year.

Witney Forum minutes are a part (a) of this report along with information on a Community Insight Profile Steering Group.

### Current Situation

#### 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Events

The Deputy Venue and Events Officer is due to meet with the C&CEO next week to firm up plans for the following events next week, including a young person's event – see the attached appendix A for ideas and costs, a senior's film and lunch buffet event, an event for children and families and an event of interest to the general public.

#### Great British Spring Clean – Up

Officers have posted a small reminder about litter and the ability to borrow litter picking equipment from the Town Council to mark this initiative. This acknowledges concerns from a member of the public about the amount of litter in town and ties in with the Keep Britain Tidy campaign – Clean – Up.

On the subject of litter Cllr Crouch has been approached by a member of the public about a six-year-old litter picker!

***"I wondered if the town council could help and award an amazing little girl who is 6 next week She is an ECO Ambassador at Witney CP school.***

***She asked for a litter picking kit for her birthday as she was fed up of seeing litter around the town today she went out with it and filled a bag of rubbish. Amazing little girl who is not 6 until the 1st March. A member of the public was so impressed he gave her a £1"***

Would members like to reward her caring actions in some way? She could perhaps be given the chance to open the rubbing post trail and be first to try them out, or perhaps she and her family might appreciate a nature walk with the Biodiversity & Green Spaces Officer.

### Dedicated signage for Councillors at the Café

With the number of A Boards already outside the Corn Exchange it is suggested that Members are given their own poster signage that fit the existing A Boards for use on the days they are in the Café. Alternatively, a pop-up banner could be purchased to highlight the event on the day.

The cost for 2 A1 waterproof posters is £30 from the Corn Exchange poster supplier. This means the In Bloom A Board will no longer be needed and will give more space and fewer obstacles directly on the Corn Exchange frontage.

In addition, the In Bloom Gazebo has not been stored correctly, is creased, and dirty and the poles and sides are not stored together. A replacement good quality Gorilla gazebo will be needed for the In Bloom stall at Witney Carnival. The cost for this is £179.99 ex VAT. Money for these items could come from the events budget underspend.

### Voter Engagement

In order to support and promote registration the Council can share this from the electoral commission,

<https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/resources/democratic-engagement-resources/partner-toolkit>

and a .gov video aimed at younger people. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HHb8lrjRPIY>

We will have posters which will be on our noticeboards and something on the digital signage and our admin team will be primed to signpost young people who may be interested.

### In Bloom Vouchers

The value of vouchers for Community Gardeners and Schools in Bloom have not increased in the last few years and officers feel that an increase would be justified given the constant rise in prices.

It is suggested that the vouchers are increased from £30 to £50 for schools, who have to start from scratch each year and that vouchers for community gardens rise from £30 to £40 as their gardens are for the most part established.

### Competitions

#### Christmas

Members are asked to consider which competitions they would like to run this year and who should be eligible to enter.

- The Child's Christmas Light
- WTC and Mayor Official Christmas Card
- Christmas Carol Service sheet cover

Traditionally, the first two have always been aimed at primary school children and over the last few years seniors in care homes have been asked to enter the third one, but there have been no entries from care homes for the last two years.

### Wild Witney

The Council has run competitions for best wild garden (adult/child) and an insect safari (child) respectively over the last two years. Members are asked if they think this should be run again.

### **Other Events to Consider**

#### Heritage Open Day (HOD)

If members wanted to hold a Heritage event related to its 50-year anniversary it could repeat the former 'Skeletons in The Closet' day held in 2017/18 with old newspapers and the old Police Summons book which we still have available to share with members of the public. We would need to book space for this in the Corn Exchange to ensure it is fully accessible.

The dates for HOD this year are 6-15 September Criteria for events include that it should run for one or more days, be accessible and entry must be free. An event was not held in 2023 due to the other commitments the Council had within the year.

#### Car Free Day

Increasingly unpopular and less well attended last year than ever before, Members are asked if they consider this to be a waste of officer time and Council resources.

Officer could explore badging this as something else or use the budget to provide equipment that promotes active travel. The Cycling without Age bike is no longer an option as the Council's trained pilot is no longer working at the Town Council. The day could still consist of guided walks and other events.

### **Environmental impact**

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

The promotion of the Great Spring Clean, Car Free Day, In Bloom and Wild Witney competition help promote environmental activities and active travel to Witney residents.

### **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.

There is a financial/reputational risk to run events and competitions simply because they have been held before which offer little or no positive feedback or return.

### **Financial implications**

- Replacement gazebo and signage for Councillors @ The Cafe as detailed above can be purchased from the events budget underspend.

- There is no budget to mark the Great British Spring Clean recognition of the young litter picker.
- All other items are within associated budgets.

### **Recommendations**

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

1. To note the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary update,
2. To consider how to reward Witney's young litter picker,
3. The purchase of permanent signage for Councillors @ the café and the replacement of the In Bloom event gazebo,
4. To support a campaign to promote voter registration,
5. An increase in Community gardener and Schools in bloom voucher values,
6. To run the Christmas and Wild Witney competitions, format and eligibility for entering these,
7. Whether members wish to run a Heritage Open Day event in September,
8. How Councillors would like to see Car Free Day work, going forward.