

STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 18 March 2024
Title: D-Day 80th Anniversary Update
Contact Officer: Communications & Community Engagement Officer

Background

Organisation of the various strands of our D-Day commemorations has been taking place and this is an update for members.

Current Situation

Contacts

Contact has been made with most of the groups and individuals who are being invited to take part. Officers have had good responses from some already.

Timetable of the Day

The plans across the day include an official cry by the Town Crier at 8am, to start the day and the culmination of the day at 9:15pm with the lighting of a lamp of peace and the reading of the tribute.

The day was also planned to include an exhibition (this is now in doubt) and short films in the Corn Exchange, the collation of local armed forces participants' stories of their involvement in D Day, and a cadet led Remembrance Service with music from the Town Band, prayers and poems, readers from army and air cadets, and secondary schools, and attended by clergy and a humanist celebrant.

The Lantern of Peace will be lit at the end of the service to draw the day to a close.

- **Town Crier** has been contacted and agreed to take part – she will be positioned on the raised pavement outside Barclays/Blue Boar as the market will be setting up at 8am. She has volunteered to be available for anything else during the day if needed.
- **Exhibition** this may now be something the museum wants to do alone at their site so we can help to promote this as we don't have enough to mount an exhibition of our own and we don't want anything we do to be lacking impact.
- **Films and Soundtracks** in the Corn Exchange – there are plenty of films about D Day – dramatisations and documentaries that we could show. Any stories we gather could be displayed around the room and we also have an excellent playlist of atmospheric soundtracks, speeches and radio broadcasts from the day.
- **Stories** – these are few and far between and again something the museum seems to be less able to collaborate on. Officers have also contacted the Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum to see if they would share what they are also collecting. There are very few Witney Stories so we might have to resort to using some of the very well researched ones that appear on the Normandy memorial website.

- **Service** Both cadet forces and the humanist celebrant have responded extremely positively to this and are looking forward to running a service. It is a school day so we expect most of their involvement to be during the early evening. The Army cadets, in particular, have close links to the airborne divisions of Ox and Bucks Light infantry. The RAF cadets have offered to bring flight simulators to recreate the initial flights of the C-47 Dakota's who left Oxfordshire/Gloucestershire and flew to Normandy with the airborne land forces, which sounds very exciting. Witney Town Band have agreed to play the music at the service.
- **Lantern of Peace** – two of these have been purchased and one has been offered to our Twin Town in Le Touquet. We have not heard back from them yet. We are proposing to buy some safer LED versions for Councillors to take into care homes during the daytime – Volunteers are being sought for this so please let the Communication and Community Engagement Officer know if you are available for a daytime visit for this.

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.

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

- Lanterns for Care homes at £12.99 each but all items are within the agreed events budget.

Recommendations

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

1. Volunteer for a daytime visit to deliver a lamp to a care home and light it with them.