

STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 3 June 2024

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. There is also a progress report on upcoming events and projects.

Current Situation

D-Day 80 Plans- June

Plans for D-Day commemorations have already been circulated to all councillors along with an invitation. A press release has also been issued and posters displayed. Here is a summary of plans for the day.

- **9am NATION'S OFFICIAL CRY FROM THE CORN EXCHANGE**
Witney's Town Crier will deliver the message from the upstairs window of the Corn Exchange, Market Square.
- **11am-6pm Free Entry The D-DAY STORY GALLERY ROOM, CORN EXCHANGE**
Explore the Story of D-Day with documents, pictures and evocative sound bites from the time.
- **1:30pm FILM Tickets £2 BIG SCREEN, CORN EXCHANGE**
The Great Escaper. Based on the true story of a veteran who 'escaped' his care home to join other veterans in Normandy to commemorate & remember fallen comrades at the D-Day Landings 70th Anniversary. Ticket includes 'rations'.
- **7:30pm-8:15pm LAMPLIGHT OF PEACE SERVICE, MARKET SQ**
With veterans, air and army cadets, the Town Band and other contributors, culminating in the lighting of the Lamplight of Peace. All welcome.

Please come along and support the events that are happening.

The Carnival- July

The Town Council is planning to enter the walking parade and also host a stall at the Carnival. Along with voting for the barrows, we will also be offering the chance to make free wildflower seed bombs. This is a golden opportunity for some simple consultation on future plans for the Splash Park and for Ralegh Crescent (if not too late).

As reported last year our stand is large and much of the equipment was heavy or difficult to move, a large gazebo, tables, chairs, an A Board and the barrows themselves. With no longer having the depot at the Leys this means that everything needs to be taken to the Leys on the day. There needs to be more support to help with set up and takedown. With a few more

people to help it would take around 30 minutes to do it all. We will be looking for volunteers to assist with this as two officers can no longer manage this unaided.

It is a Town Council community event on quite a large scale and would benefit from assistance from Councillors who could commit to being there a little before the start or after the finish (not both ends of the day).

Play Day- August

Officers are badging this year's play day as a 50th Anniversary event and as such it is suggested that the Council has a stand and offer an activity as it always used to. This could be rock painting – making illuminated letters for their names or turning 5 and 0 into different things, or possibly making rocks as garden labels for herbs, flowers or vegetables. Again, volunteers would be welcome.

Heritage Open Day – September

There are plans to hold a Heritage Open Day Event this year. It is suggested that this runs from 3-9pm on Wednesday 11th September and into the evening to allow those working to attend and then a morning into the afternoon session on Thursday 12th from 9am– 2pm. This will be revisiting 'Skeletons In Your Closet' project from 2016.

“Look up your local ancestors and discover their misdeeds in the Oxfordshire Constabulary Summons Register dated 1857 onwards! What were they charged with? What was their sentence? Some very familiar local names from Witney and the surrounding villages are here.

The Council will also have a selection of old copies of the Witney Gazette dating back as far as the 1950's, along with other historical records and documents.”



It is proposed that the Council holds the Mayor's 50th anniversary fundraiser coffee morning on the Thursday morning - a fiftieth anniversary cake and a dozen Gluten Free cupcakes such as those we had for the Civic Reception could be purchased for the occasion. This event has been included in budget setting. Former Councillors and anyone involved with WTC over the last 50 years could be encouraged to attend.

Car Free Day -September

It is understood there is no desire from the District or County Councils to have any involvement with Car Free Day which would fall on a Sunday 22nd September this year. Therefore, Car Free Day will be an online event. The Council still has a budget of £1,000 and

some of this could be used to fund some active travel activities run by third parties, such as a contribution to the popular history walks that the museum lead or the provision of booklets and pencils and promotion of the Wildlife Walking trail.

Mental Health Day October 10th

It is suggested that the Town Council approaches MIND and other agencies to see if they would like free use of the Corn Exchange to stage an event or some workshops as part of a wellbeing/Mental Health event.

Witney Wild Gardens

There have been no entries so far so please share details of this. Officers will update the Social Media post to give a fresh look in the next few days. Please share with any appropriate group or individuals who may be interested in taking part.

The Wildlife Trail at the Lake and Country Park

This was officially opened by the Mayor and Lois, the litter-picker in May. Officers have produced a simple booklet that can be hosted on the website and downloaded. It will also be sent to schools as a printable pdf and officers will have some ready printed copies available in the admin office. The Council could consider purchasing some of the large wax crayons or some thick nibbed pencils to be given out with these.

50th Anniversary events

Outline planning for these has taken, but some are still to be diarised and further research on suppliers for the VR day is still taking place.

- VR Day for Teens
- Play Day for families with young children (1 August)
- Mayors Coffee Morning (12th September)
- 70s Disco for Adults
- Seniors film screening with afternoon tea (8th October)

Official Portrait of His Majesty King Charles III

The Town Council, as with other town and parish councils has been gifted an official portrait of His Majesty the King. Members are asked to consider whether this should be displayed, and where to have most prominence and visibility. Previously, a portrait of Her Majesty the Queen was hung in the Town Council Chamber for many years.

Eurovision Party 2025

It is proposed that given the almost universal popularity of the Eurovision Song Contest and parties that happen around it, that next year the Council holds a Eurovision party in the Corn Exchange on the night of the competition. The energy of Eurovision is friendly welcoming and

inclusive and helps integrate with our European friends, a perfect starting point for a community event for adults.

The contest itself can be shown on the big screen and the audience can choose the Corn Exchange winner.

Fancy dress encouraged, with prizes for the best costumes and a variety of food and drinks themed on the host country (Switzerland) could be on offer. It's the perfect excuse to make some money on cocktails and mocktails. Tickets would be charged for. If this was set at £15 an audience of 100 would generate £1500 and if 50 of those bought food and cocktails that's potentially another £750. This event would take place in May, so if agreed, a budget would need to be set at the next budget setting.

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.

- £50 to cover materials for a Play Day Activity (events budget)
- £50 to cover materials for seed bombs at the Carnival (events budget)
- Money for booklets and pencils for wildlife trail can be covered from the Car Free day budget
- A small budget would need to be set for a Eurovision Party

Recommendations

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

1. That the Council uses the Carnival as a consulting opportunity
2. That the Town Council has a fiftieth anniversary activity at the Play Day
3. That the Mayor's coffee morning takes place on the same day as the HOD event, and a budget is set for both
4. That the Council offers the Corn Exchange to Mental Health charities for October 10th
5. That members decide on hanging the Royal portrait.
6. That the council hosts a Eurovision party in 2025