

## **STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE**

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**Date:** Monday, 15 July 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. There is also a progress report on upcoming events and projects.

### **Current Situation**

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

The £50 for fifty grants was launched on Tuesday July 9<sup>th</sup>. There will be two dates where submitted requests will be taken to the Policy Governance and Finance committee in September and November for ratification (recommendation will be made by officers and Chair of PG&F Committee).

A date for the senior's cinema matinee has been set for Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> October. A suitable film will be decided nearer the time. The Great Escaper, shown as part of the D-Day commemorations was extremely popular, so officers will be looking for something along those lines. An afternoon tea will be offered with the film.

Virtual Reality event for young people is booked in for Monday 19<sup>th</sup> August in the Corn Exchange Main Hall. Quotes from two companies have been sought and the Corn Exchange is booked for the afternoon and into the evening.

An additional sum has been applied for as a grant from the Town Hall Charity as VR and Arcade games are very expensive and the Council needs more than two or three items to make it successful. Councillors may like to consider whether the event should be free but ticketed in the same way as the advent fayre and perhaps wristbands that give either 30 minutes or an hour are issued to make sure enough people are able to access the machines and there is no hogging. Many of the more expensive items are manned by staff from the suppliers.

#### World Mental Health Day – 10<sup>th</sup> October

Officers will contact MIND and other agencies to see if they would like to run a Mental Health and Wellness event and what format they would like this to take. The Town Council will support this with use of the hall, publicity and in any other practical ways that we can. Availability of the Corn Exchange has been confirmed and provisionally booked.

### Community Gardeners and Volunteers Picnic Tea/Witney TC 50th/RHS 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Invitations have been issued to the Council's In Bloom Gardening Groups, members of The Shed and the volunteers that regularly help out at the Lake and Country Park. A picnic tea will be held at the Lake weather permitting. The Biodiversity and Green Spaces officer and his assistant, along with the Communications and Community Engagement Officer and Stronger Communities Administrator will attend to thank the different groups for all their help in making the Town more attractive and for demonstrating Civic Pride. In the event of inclement weather, we may need to take the tea indoors. Councillors are welcome to join us on 22 July at 2pm.

### Witney Youth Council launch

Applications for the Youth Council opened on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> July and while the focus for core members is focused on schools, there will be some places for individual applications from other organisations and groups. An official PR has been released and the new web page devoted to this is up and running. This was also promoted at Witney Carnival.

### White Ribbon Day – 25<sup>th</sup> November

Having signed the White Ribbon Promise in 2023, the Council should help promote the benefits of the scheme and run at least one event which highlights domestic abuse against women and girls.

In 2022, the Council gave permission for a local art group to use the Community Window and hang artwork in the Gallery Room during the 16 Days of Activism which is associated with this cause.

### Councillor Engagement – Councillors @ The Café Annual Review

Members are asked to consider the coffee mornings and their impact after one year of running. The Communications and Community Engagement officer sought feedback on this from the Leader of the Council earlier in the year, but it would be useful to collect feedback from other councillors too.

These are the points to feedback on:

- How are the Councillor in the café sessions going?
- Do Councillors get enough residents coming each session to make it worthwhile?
- Do Councillors feel it makes a positive difference to your work?
- Is there anything the Council can do to improve the sessions?
- Is the space satisfactory?

## **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.

## **Social Value**

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates.

All of the planned engagement above is aimed at having a positive effect on Witney residents and their sense of belonging, being heard and providing activities to improve their day-to-day lives.

## **Financial implications**

- All the above are paid for from existing budget or grants.

## **Recommendations**

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

- That councillors consider whether or not to ticket and wristband the Virtual Reality event
- How to mark White Ribbon Day
- Any feedback about the Councillors in the Café