
Agenda Item:	External Events Report
Meeting Date:	Monday 23 rd September 2024
Contact Officer:	Deputy Venue & Events Officer

The purpose of this report is to update the council on the external events that have occurred on Town Council land in 2024, as well as upcoming community events for the rest of the year.

Background

Witney Town Council operates and manages outdoor spaces at the Leys, Burwell, Oxlease and St George's Field, which can be hired by third parties to host their own events. These make up a crucial part of the community engagement for the people of Witney and is intended to offer entertainment for the people of Witney throughout the year.

In addition, civic events are run throughout the year along with those at the Corn Exchange which are for the benefit of the Community. This report provides an update on those which have taken place so far, those ahead and those where further decisions are required of the Council.

Current Situation

Update on Events that have taken place so far this year:

Hatwell's funfair 13th – 20th May

As mentioned in the previous report in June, a member of Hatwell's raised that their posters were being removed around town despite being within the 2 weeks they had been allowed for previous years. Officers contacted WODC to inform them of this issue which has appeared to have been resolved for events since.

Witney Pride Saturday 27th May

No updates to report since the last meeting.

Witney Music Festival 7th & 8th June:

Witney Music Festival ran another popular annual event on The Leys this year. The festival had some additions and improvements this year (communicated on WTC social media pre-event) including a new Dance Tent, an improved VIP bar and a bigger Main Stage. The festival is proud to promote local artists on the line-up alongside some nationally known artists.

Officers have met with director, post-event for some initial feedback, which was largely positive. They made a point to thank the council for its continued support and being a driving force in making the festival possible, they would like the council to be recognised publicly for this. Officers have extended and invite for a full wash-up meeting with the Directors of the festival and the Events and Operations officers, to cover this year's event and working together to make next year's event a success for both parties.

Oxford Playhouse Outreach 15th & 16th June

Oxford Playhouse returned to The Leys this year to host free outreach performances for young people around the county.

Witney Carnival 13th July

The annual Witney Carnival was hosted at The Leys on 13th July, following the procession around the town centre. Officers have noted that this year's event was largely successful with an impressive number of stalls and community engagement.

Officers have met with organisers of the Carnival to evaluate the event and discuss areas for improvement for next year's event and how the council and organisers can work together to facilitate the event, including on areas for disabled parking.

OPA Play Day - Thursday 1st August

This year, OPA Play Day took place at West Witney Sports Ground, and made use of the pavilion on site. Organisers have fed back that this event was well attended by the people of Witney, and they have received great feedback from attendees. OPA would also like to thank the council for their contribution to the event, helping make it possible.

Witney Feast 16th – 17th September

At the time of writing, Witney Feast is ongoing on The Leys. Officers met with representatives from Wilson's Fun Fair this week who had lots of positive feedback on their experience at Witney over the years.

Upcoming Events

Circus Ginett 30th September – 6th October

Touring Circus company have once again hired the Leys for a visit this autumn.

Remembrance Sunday, 10th November

Plans have begun to take shape for this year's Remembrance Service, organised by officers of the Town Council and supported by various local organisations. A meeting with key stakeholders for the event has been arranged to run through plans for the day including timings and positioning of groups. Based on feedback of last year's successful event, there are no major changes from last year's structure.

Advent Fayre 1st December

The annual Advent Fayre will be hosted on Sunday 1st December this year. Following positive feedback from last year's event, the free ticketed sessions will continue. Officers are looking to amend the structure slightly to enable us to welcome more children at this year's event.

It is important to note that this event is not possible to run without the help of councillors, and officers would like to request that councillors volunteer some time on this day to help set up, run and pack down the event. This is more important this year as The Corn Exchange is hosting a wedding reception the evening before, so no work can be done to set up the room in advance of the day.

Councillors support is greatly appreciated to help make this event possible for the children of Witney.

Impact Assessments

The Town Council has a duty to consider the effects of its decisions, functions and activities on equality, biodiversity, and crime & disorder. Consideration should also be given to effects on the environment, given the Council's Climate Emergency declaration in 2019.

- a) Equality – The benefits have previously been discussed when considered.
- b) Biodiversity – There is no impact from this report
- c) Crime & Disorder - The Council may like to consider further encouragement of crime and disorder mitigations by external providers.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – The Council may like to consider further encouragement of green initiatives by external partners.

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.

The external events provide immeasurable value for many groups in Witney's community to make them feel wanted and improve happiness. They also help the local economy.

Financial implications

- All events are within existing budgets. The Council may like to consider re-affirming the Witney Music Festival Partnership and monetary funding of £10k for 2025/26.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report.