

**Witney Town Council**  
**VE & VJ Day 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Task & Finish Group**

**Virtually via Microsoft Teams**  
**21 November 2024, 4pm**

**In Attendance:** Cllr J Aitman, Cllr O Collins, Cllr R Crouch, Cllr G Meadows, Cllr J Robertshaw.

Adam Clapton, Polly Inness, Cara Cannon, Thomas Davies, Annie Hathaway.

**Election of Chair:** Cllr J Aitman was elected as Chair of the T&F Group.

**Apologies of Absence:** Cllr J Treloar

**Terms of Reference:** The terms of reference for the T&F Group were received and approved.

**Scoping Report:**

The Task & Finish Group received the report of the Communications & Community Engagement Officer (CCEO).

Details of the last notable commemoration events were provided to Members for information.

The Group focussed attention on the VE Day 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2025 and were asked to consider things that would work around having the charter market in place all day on that date. Some ideas from the national timetable of events put forward for VE Day Commemorations were adopted.

The suggested national events this time were scheduled for that day only and were intended to be the last major celebration before the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, due to this being the last likely where WW2 veterans were able to attend.

It was agreed the recommendation to Council should be the following:

9am            **VE Day Proclamation** – undertaken by the Town Crier.

**Raising of the Union Flag at the Town Hall** – undertaken by the then Mayor.

During the day, the Group suggested schools could be invited to take part in the celebrations by way of fancy-dress competitions, but as they will be busy with SATS this should be something that they organise for themselves, and the Council could share any photos.

6:25pm        **Ring of bells** as suggested by the Mayor. This would precede the ringing of church bells at St Mary's at 6:30pm. It is envisaged that people will bring their own bells such as hand bells or bicycle bells (invite Windrush Bike Project to form a section) and form a line of ringers. Morris dancers could also be invited to attend and take part.

6.30pm        **Ring out in Celebration of Peace** – An event with cathedrals and church bellringers across the Country.

9.30pm      **Lamplight of Peace** (newly wrapped plinth)  
**Singing of hymn** – I vow to thee my Country. Undertaken by a Witney Singing Group  
**VE Day 80 Tribute** – Undertaken by the then Mayor

Between approx. 4pm and 9pm, the Group agreed there should be live music on Market Square/at the 1863 Café Bar, noting that the Corn Exchange rooms were already let that evening to regular hirers. This could be Witney Town Band and/or other performers/ open mic performers and the cadet services could also be invited to attend. The Corn Exchange staff would be keen to promote this.

Further items agreed by the T&F Group were as follows:

- Decorate the Corn Exchange & Town Hall with red, white and blue bunting – made by residents for the Coronation of King Charles III.
- Light up the Corn Exchange
- Contact Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum to see what they are doing
- Promote and encourage street parties over the weekend
- Encourage businesses to decorate their windows in a 1940's theme
- Invite twinning representatives to the events on the evening of 8<sup>th</sup> May
- Invite residents to publish pictures from Witney 80 years ago for VE Day street parties.

There was little information about celebrating the VJ Day anniversary on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2025, but these would be expected in the new year. Initial suggestions including contacting the Soldiers of Oxfordshire Museum and making former Japanese POW Arthur Titherington the focus. Witney Museum may be able to help with that but as per D-Day, they may prefer to manage their own display.

It was felt that all items could be easily achieved within the provisional budget of £1,500 (for both).

**Recommended:**

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the recommendations be presented to the Council for approval so that officers may begin costing/planning the events and contacting those suggested to take part.

Meeting closed at 16.54pm

---

The next meeting of the T&F Group is scheduled for 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2025, 4pm