

Witney Town Council
VE & VJ Day 80th Anniversary Task & Finish Group

Virtually via Microsoft Teams
23 January 2025, 4pm

In Attendance: Cllr J Aitman (Chair), Cllr O Collins, Cllr R Crouch, Cllr J Robertshaw.

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

Apologies of Absence: There were no apologies for absence.

Minutes: The minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2024 were agreed as a correct record of the meeting.

VE & VJ Days Anniversaries Report:

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

A Member suggested that the Royal British Legion be invited to attend during the day to raise money for the charity.

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

9.00am **VE Day Proclamation** – undertaken by the Town Crier & Mr R Spurs Deputy Lieutenant (tbc).

Raising of the Union Flag at the Town Hall – undertaken by the newly elected Mayor.

1-4.15pm **1940's Afternoon Tea (1863 Café Bar)** - Members discussed holding an afternoon tea which would have 1940's style entertainment. A group, The Candy Girls had been sourced and were available for a cost of £700 to perform 2x 45-minute sets. Members agreed to this suggestion and debated whether this should be a booked, paid for event or a first come-first serve. It was felt the latter was more inclusive but it could become an issue if it was oversubscribed. A charge of £10 should look to cover costs only and would also prevent people booking and not turning up. (2 sittings – 1-2.30pm & 2.45-4.15pm).

6.00-6.25pm **Witney Town Band/Tea Dancers or Buttercross Theatre** – Tables and chairs in Market Square for bring your own street party – cakes provided.

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 was envisaged that people will bring their own bells such as hand bells or bicycle bells (invite Windrush Bike Project to form a section, Cadets, scouts, fire service) and form a line of ringers around Church Green. Morris dancers could also be invited to attend and take part along with Ducklington Bellringers. Cllr Collins will be taking on the management of this task

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

6.45-7.30pm **Witney Town Band (cont.)**

7.30-8.00pm **Round The Square Reading** – Undertaken by Cllr Owen Collins

Lamplight of Peace (newly wrapped plinth)

Singing of hymn – I vow to thee my Country. Undertaken by a Witney Singing Group (West Oxfordshire Academy of Performing Arts tbc).

VE Day 80 Tribute – Undertaken by the newly elected Mayor

There was discussion as to whether a MC from the Town Council was required for this part of the ceremony and it was agreed to invite cadet services and Royal British Legion representatives.

8.00pm **Open Mic Night (1863 Café Bar)** – 1940's/Best of British/Brit Pop if possible.

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
- Promote and encourage street parties over the weekend
- Encourage businesses to decorate their windows in a 1940's theme. Advertise on Witney Memories along with the bell ringing.
- Invite twinning representatives to the events on the evening of 8th May
- Print pictures from VE Day on banners to be displayed outside the Corn Exchange.
- Contact the schools to see what they were planning for the anniversaries.
- Consider involvement of Windrush Radio – see if they will cover live.

VJ Day was still a work in progress but would be on a smaller scale to the VE Day anniversary. It was still envisaged this would be an exhibition. A final recommendation would be made at the next meeting in March.

It was felt that all items could be achieved within the agreed budget of £1,000 (for both anniversaries). If this was not possible, there was likely to be an underspend in the 50th Anniversary Grant fund which could plug a gap, subject to Council approval.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the final recommendations above be presented to the Council meeting on 17th February for approval. Including financial outlay:
 - a. £700 Candy Girls
 - b. £100 for new plinth covers
 - c. large sepia banners, cupcakes and any tableware.

Meeting closed at 4:50pm

The next meeting of the T&F Group is scheduled for 13th March 2025, 4pm