
Agenda Item:	Community Engagement Report
Meeting Date:	Monday, 14 July 2025
Contact Officer:	Communications & Community Engagement Officer

The purpose of this report is to inform Councillors about proposed projects, events and activities that will provide opportunities for engaging with the community.

Current Situation

VJ Day 80th Anniversary – 15th August 2025

At the VJ Day working party meeting on Thursday 3 July Councillors agreed the fully range of proposed events as per the attached poster. The day has a distinctly different feel with a focus on Remembrance.

Friday 15th August 2025

- *9am: Official Town Cry (Corn Exchange)*
- *and afterwards Flag Raising (Town Hall)*
- *10am - 4pm Witney Museum will be displaying some of the photographs and books from the collection of Arthur Titherington (Local Japanese POW and Chair of the Japanese Labour Camp Survivors)*
- *11am - Wreath Laying at the Church Green War Memorial with RBL and Reinstating plaque and placing of Tribute flowers - Arthur Titherington's memorial Bench on Church Green with Round Table who dedicated the original bench.*
- *12 noon - 2pm Discover the Commonwealth War Graves walk and the Commonwealth War Graves Commission app and join us for refreshments at Tower Hill Chapel*
- *Royal British Legion will be selling poppies in the Market Square*

Sunday 17 August 2025

- *Civic Service VJ Day 80 service 10.45am at St Mary's Church, Church Green - details to follow*

In the weeks leading up to VJ Day, community groups have been invited to enhance our war memorials located at The Leys, Newland, and Church Green. They are encouraged to tidy and decorate these sites as they choose. They will be rewarded with a Thank You picnic while they are working on their memorial.

Paper Japanese Cranes will be made by various groups and collected for display in the Corn Exchange

Groups will also be invited to prepare post box toppers with a theme of peace if there is time.

The budget for the two events was reduced when the budget/precept were set, so there are little to no funds remaining to hold anything more substantial than the items above. The Communications and Community Engagement Officer is on leave that week, so there will be fewer officers available.

Love Parks Week 26th July to 4th August 2025

One of the Town Band Concerts is scheduled to fall within the time frame for Love Parks activities (27th July at Oxlease recreation Ground).

It is also proposed that the council uses the same period to run another awareness campaign about the hazards and unpleasantness of dog mess and remind dog owners of their responsibilities.

Officers will refresh the content of the activity leaflets for the Lake and Country Park. Is there anything else that Councillors would like to include?

The Community Shed

This has been installed and all the events tables, chairs and Gazebos are now able to be stored safely. The Town Band has now used them for the first of their WTC funded concerts.

Youth Council Exchange visit from Le Touquet – 8th July 2025

The Youth Council met with their French counterparts and shared a fish and chip supper. It was a lively event with lots of conversations taking place and relationship building. Plans have been established for them to meet on-line though many of them would also like to visit France at some time!

ASB meeting with TVP at Leys

Community Engagement Initiatives

The Communications and Community Engagement Officer will be part of the WTC team meeting with Thames Valley Police on the Leys on Monday 14th July to discuss activities that might displace and deter ASB from the area. This coincides with a TVP summer campaign on reducing ASB and is in line with Actions identified in the newly adopted Community Engagement Strategy:

1. Plan and co-ordinate activities and 5 Continue to partner and support our community organisations
- Consider any possible collaboration/partnership and make the most effective use of our resources
 - Continue to partner and support our community organisations

Climate Event (September 2025)

The Community Engagement officers will be working with the Compliance & Environment Officer on this event which is due to be discussed at the initial Climate Action Working Party meeting.

Witney Community Insight Profile

Officers will provide a verbal update on this project at the meeting.

Witney Forum Notes

Notes from the Witney Forum (24th June 2025) are appended to this report.

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 – no direct implications.
- b) Biodiversity – no direct implications.
- c) Crime & Disorder – as stated in the report. The ASB meeting is about any changes or adopted approach in deterring potential crime and disorder.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – Love Parks week helps promote environmental places. Use during heatwaves will be considered as part of the communications.

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.

By highlighting Love Parks week the Council will be highlighting the outside places families are able to enjoy at no cost. The Youth Council members gained cultural experience by meeting their Le Touquet counterparts. Offering events on the 80th anniversary of VJ Day acknowledges the past and personal links the town has to the occasion.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and consider,

1. The updates concerning the VJ Day 80th Anniversary, the Community Shed, the Le Touquet Youth Council visit, the Witney Community Insight Group and the forthcoming climate event.
2. Consider any further suggestion on how the Council could mark Love Parks Week.
3. Note the minutes of the Witney Forum held on 24th June 2025.