
Agenda Item: Third-Party Events Report

Meeting Date: Monday 15th September 2025

Contact Officer: Venue & Events Officer

The purpose of this report is to update members on the Third-Party Events that have taken place on WTC land over the summer of 2025.

Background

Witney Town Council facilitates a number of events throughout the year on council managed land such as The Leys, Burwell Recreation Ground and West Witney Playing Fields. Officers work with the organisers of these events to review their event plans to ensure; health and safety, licensing and legal compliance, protection from damage to our ground (through measures to limit damage and holding damage deposits) and to obtain their specific requirements for the grounds team to facilitate such as removing bollards for vehicle access etc.

Witney Town Council is also a partner of some of these events, including Witney Music Festival. Officers work in collaboration with the partner organisations by providing promotional support to help maximise the attendance of the event and to showcase the partnership between the council and the organisation.

Current Situation

Past Events

- **Hatwell's Funfair – 14th – 18th May:** A yearly fairground event, aimed at younger children and families. This event is on a smaller scale than the Witney Feast, but still a substantial event for the town. This event was well attended this year, largely helped by the good weather that week.
- **Witney Pride – 24th May:** Witney pride hosted their third annual event at The Leys on 24th May 2025. The event began with a procession through the Town centre to the Leys, where the main event had been set up. The main event on the leys included live music and entertainment, community groups, and food and drink vendors. The event received some positive media coverage, praising the impressive turnout.
- **Witney Music Festival – 6th & 7th June:** Witney Music Festival took place on The Leys on a very rainy weekend in June. Whilst the weather would've impacted the attendance numbers, the event ploughed on in good spirit. The event supported local musicians and DJ's, with the majority of the main stage acts being local bands. Officers

have arranged a full wash up meeting for 15th September with the festival directors, to review this year's performance and look ahead at improvements that will be made to next year's festival. A report for the Council (including finances has also been requested).

- **Circus Cortex – CANCELLED:** Unfortunately, this new event planned for June 2025 was cancelled by the production, along with their other dates nationally.
- **Witney Carnival – Saturday 12th July:** The carnival, which is organised by Witney Round Table, Witney Lions Club, Witney Rotary Club and the Witney Air Cadets, returned on 12th July 2025. The Carnival is the largest annual event at The Leys by land, covering both sides of the recreation ground. Officers worked closely with the organisers to ensure we can facilitate the event and that their plans for the event were safe and compliant.
- **OPA Play Day – Thursday 7th August.** The OPA Play Day ran at Burwell Recreation Ground was a successful event, well attended by families of Witney. The event was free of charge with free activities. Taken from OPA's report on the event: *"Playday is the national day for play, celebrated each year across the UK. The theme for this year's Playday is ... Spaces for Play. This year's theme highlights the vital importance of accessible, inclusive spaces where children and young people have opportunities to play freely, spending time, and connecting with friends – and feel valued as part of their community.* This a valuable event for the town and Officers will welcome them back next year.

Upcoming Events

- **Witney Feast – 14th – 16th September:** Witney Feast is operating an additional day on Sunday 14th September, on top of their regular Monday and Tuesday openings. The Golden Gallopers service will occur at 1pm on the Sunday, blessing the fair which celebrates the rededication of St Mary's Church. After the service, the fair will open for a special family afternoon. There will be street entertainers including jugglers, as well as music, food, drink, rides and games.
- **Circus Ginnett 27th October – 2nd November:** A popular touring circus event is returning to the leys this year.
- **Remembrance Service:** Officers are into the planning phase of this years Remembrance Service. This event is run by Officers of WTC, with involvement from local organisations. After a successfully ran event last year, there will be minimal changes to this year's event plan, with some minor adjustments to ensure things run smoothly on the day.

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 – All events should be equal and inclusive.
- b) Biodiversity – see below – environment and climate.
- c) Crime & Disorder – third party hirers should be including mitigation in their event plans.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency – The Compliance & Environment Officer will be looking at third party hire and the initiatives hirers should take in relation to these areas.

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.

Community events such as music festivals, fairs, pride celebrations, and carnivals play a vital role in strengthening the social fabric of a town. These gatherings create inclusive spaces where people from diverse backgrounds can come together to celebrate, connect, and share experiences.

These events also encourage volunteerism and community involvement, empowering residents to actively shape their town's character.

Financial implications

- The subsidised letting budget at the Leys was oversubscribed in 2025-26.
- An annual grant of £10,000 to Witney Music Festival.
- The budget for contributions towards Witney Carnival and the Christmas Lights switch on events are likely to be exceeded in the current year (decision pending).

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and,

1. Consider increasing the subsidised lettings budget for the Leys in 2026-27 which was slightly above budget within this year.
2. Consider raising the budget of the town council's contribution to Witney Carnival for 2026-27.
3. Consider reconfirming the grant award for Witney Music festival for 2026-27 in line with the partnership agreement.