

NATIONAL PRIDE WORKING PARTY



Agenda Item: Celebrating Local & British Values

Meeting Date: Thursday, 13 November 2025

Contact Officer: Deputy Town Clerk

The purpose of this report is to invite Members of the Working Party to consider ways to celebrate local and British values and to promote a shared sense of civic and national pride within the community.

Background

At the meeting of the Stronger Communities Committee held on 15 September, the Council resolved that a Working Party should be established to explore ideas for celebrating Britishness and national pride (*Minute No. SC521(2) refers*).

In their report to the Committee, the Communications & Community Engagement Officer advised that while Witney Town Council already celebrated national events and followed established protocols for ceremonial occasions, regularly making use of flags and lighting up of buildings, there was now a broader expectation to adopt more frequent flag-flying as a means of celebrating shared traditions, national pride, and occasions of commemoration or celebration.

At the meeting, the Committee also recommended that the town's coat of arms be flown year-round from the Town Hall, with the Union Flag reserved for designated national days and events to mark their particular significance.

Current Situation

This Working Party is asked to consider the following suggestions, presented to the above Committee which are below, and report back to the Council on thoughts and ideas for celebrating local/civic and national values in the wider context.

Local – Witney & Oxfordshire

Flag flying: Witney Coat of Arms

At the meeting on 15th September, the Stronger Communities Committee resolved to fly the town's coat of arms all year round (apart from other flag flying days).

The town flag features Witney's heraldic crest, and this demonstrates civic pride, a sense of belonging and reflects the town's history and heritage with references to glove making, the river Windrush, woollen mills etc as depicted on the heraldic crest below a Paschal lamb.



Flag flying: Oxfordshire Coat of Arms

There is also the opportunity to identify as part of the County of Oxfordshire. There is an official flag for Oxfordshire which is flown in Oxford on Historic County Flags Day, an annual celebration on July 23rd and St Frideswide's Day on October 18th. It has since 1949. Thame Town Council flies it for St Frideswide's Day. St Frideswide is the Patron Saint of Oxford.

Further suggestions for localised culture events:

- Best of English food event (suggested by a resident)
- Heritage Open Days themed around street names and heritage

National – England & Great Britain (UK)

Flag flying: Nationally

The Council flies the flag of St George on 23 April to mark St George's Day (also William Shakespeare's birthday), as well as in celebration of national teams and their sporting achievements.

The Council also flies the Union Flag (often referred to as the Union Jack, a term now widely accepted whether used at sea or on land) to represent Witney's place within Great Britain as a geographical island and within the United Kingdom as a political union that includes Northern Ireland. The Union Flag is flown to mark royal, civic, and national commemorations, remembrances, and anniversaries, in accordance with the designated flag-flying days published on the UK Government website: [Union Flag flying guidance for UK government buildings – GOV.U](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/union-flag-flying-guidance-for-uk-government-buildings)

The Working Party may like to consider facilitating larger events to mark the following within budget and resourcing capabilities:

- St George's Day – St George's Day Parade, best dressed window display, Corn Exchange Bar themed offers
- Armed Forces Day
- Battle of Britain Day – parade, flag raising ceremony, service, film screening

International

In addition, by former resolution, the Town Council flies flags on international days including, Commonwealth Day, World Refugee Day, and United Nations Day.

The Council's flag-flying dates are attached as **Appendix A** to this report.

Working Party Members are invited to discuss the above and make recommendations on these suggestions (or any others) to the Stronger Communities Committee for 2026-27 budget-setting on 17 November 2025.

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 – Celebrating British values can enhance equality by promoting shared fairness, respect, and participation. However, without inclusive engagement, there is a risk of exclusion or alienation for minority groups. The Council must ensure that “British values” are understood as inclusive civic values that belong to everyone who calls Witney and the UK their home.
- b) Crime & Disorder – If implemented responsibly, the celebration of British values is likely to have a positive impact on crime and disorder, strengthening civic pride and shared responsibility for safety. However, without inclusive planning and pro-active management, there is a minimal risk of social tension or antisocial behaviour.
- c) Environment & Climate Emergency – Celebrating British values in Witney can have both positive and negative environmental impacts, depending on how events are organised and the sustainability of their offering.

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.

- Celebrating British values in Witney carries low to moderate risks when planned inclusively and transparently. Challenges arise around perception, inclusion, and community cohesion. However, these risks can be effectively mitigated allowing the celebration to deliver strong social, educational, and civic benefits.

Social Value

Social value is the positive change the Council creates in the local community within which it operates.

Celebrating British values in Witney could create social value by promoting unity, understanding, and civic pride/participation. When inclusive and sensitive, they help

strengthen local identity, enhance wellbeing, and builds trust between communities. The key to maximising social value is in ensuring that any celebrations reflect the diversity, equality, and shared aspirations of residents.

Financial implications

- There are no financial implications at this point.
- Any additional events beyond the Council's current events calendar will need additional resources.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and:

1. Consider how Witney Town Council could enhance the celebration of British values and local/national civic pride in Witney.
2. Recommend a budget for any events in 2026 to the Stronger Communities Committee on 17 November 2025.
3. Agree the date of the next Working Party meeting if appropriate.