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**Agenda Item:** St. Georges Day & Armed Forces Day Events Update

**Meeting Date:** Wednesday, 18 February 2026

**Contact Officer:** Communications & Community Engagement Officer

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The purpose of this report is to update Councillors on the progress of planning events to celebrate St George's Day across three dates at the end of April, and for Armed Forces Day in June 2026.

Most activities for St George's Day have been repositioned to the weekend to allow for accessibility to more people. This approach establishes a structured but scalable model: a combination of civic ceremony, community participation, family activity, and town centre engagement. The intention remains to develop a repeatable annual framework that can evolve in future years, if desired.

## Current Situation

### Location and Date

#### Confirmed Activities

Date to be confirmed –

**Community Football match/tournament** -Organised and hosted by Witney Town FC

Thursday April 23<sup>rd</sup>

**St George's Day Flag Raising and Town Cry**

Saturday April 25<sup>th</sup>

**Family Workshop organised by** Witney and District Museum-- Time to be confirmed

- Working idea/title is a 'make your own dragon' session

Sunday April 26<sup>th</sup>

**St George's Day Walk with Sonia** – Time to be confirmed

- Walk starts Market Sq – and ends ST George's chapel at St Mary's Church – focus is on the bravery of Witney people who faced their own dragons.
- Refreshments by WTC – possibly cupcakes and drink or something from 1863 – we can use tokens

Sunday April 26<sup>th</sup> - 12 noon to 4pm – individual timings to be arranged

### **St George's Day Family Activities**

#### **Music, food and entertainment in the Market Square which includes:**

- **Music from the Witney Town Band**
- **Songs from local choir, Witney Vocals**
- **Witney Guitar Club**
- **Morris Dancing to be confirmed**
- **Food and drink stalls**
- **Celebration of our Front-Line services Police, Ambulance and Fire and Rescue**  
At a given time, say 1pm, Police, Fire and NHS vehicles arrive together to music (something recognisable and upbeat and associated with each of them- played by the Town Band). They could pull onto the Market Square with blue lights on for effect (the little ones will like it) and for additional health and safety while in motion. Crews step out and are greeted with applause.

There will be an official thank you to them all for all they do for our town.

Invite the crowd to join in with applause or wave flags.

They would only need to stay for around 30 minutes or so, but for as long as they want to or can and children can explore the vehicles at this point.

Bunting for each FL service will be hung in that area of market square.

- **Witney Radio compering**
- **Display of winner's entries for school's competition, 'Witney's Dragon'**  
The school's competition is an invitation for teachers to submit one piece of A3 art from each school themed – 'If Witney had a dragon, what would it look like'
- **A thank you to our scouts for their St George's Day litter pick**

### **Local Organisations and Businesses**

Local organisations are being considered for involvement in the event:

- **Air and Army Cadets** have been written to – Invited to use The Leys on Armed Forces Day for an activity of their choice. The Mayor's cadets will be asked to join us for the flag raising and town cry if possible.
- **The Chamber of Commerce** has responded positively to being invited to take part in a best themed window or dragon trail competition

### **Armed Forces Day 2026**

The town's local cadet forces have accepted the offer to hold an event on The Leys to mark the occasion and are now working together to organise it.

### **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 proposed projects and events aim to be inclusive and accessible to all residents, supporting equal participation across the community.
- b) Biodiversity –  
No direct impact on biodiversity is anticipated from these activities. Outdoor events will continue to use existing green spaces responsibly.
- c) Crime & Disorder –  
  
The event has been designed with a strong family focus, creating a welcoming, inclusive and community-centred atmosphere. By prioritising activities that appeal to children, parents, grandparents and carers, the programme aims to attract a broad cross-section of residents and encourage positive, intergenerational participation in a safe and celebratory environment.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency –  
Events and communications will consider environmental impact, minimising waste and promoting sustainable practices in line with the Council's Climate Emergency declaration.

## **Risk**

Councillors should note that, while the programme is proportionate and community-focused, it carries standard event management risks. These include adverse weather, coordination of performers and vehicle movements, health and safety requirements, and officer capacity. Particular care will be required for the timed arrival of Police, Fire and Ambulance vehicles, with agreed routes, stewarding and risk assessments in place.

These risks will be mitigated through a clear event plan, site layout, documentation from participants, appropriate stewarding, and weather contingency arrangements. Members are asked to acknowledge and accept the residual risks associated with delivering an outdoor, multi-partner event.

## **Social Value**

The event has the potential to strengthen community engagement by bringing together local groups, organisations, and businesses, building a sense of pride and belonging. It will also provide opportunities to celebrate public services such as the NHS, Armed Forces, and emergency services, while encouraging local participation and collaboration. This partnership-based model also strengthens relationships that can be built upon for future annual events and other celebrations.

## **Financial**

All activities are intended to be delivered within the allocated £1,500 budget.

Expenditure will cover essential elements such as refreshments, event materials, display items, minor equipment hire (if required), and promotional support. Officer time will be managed within existing staffing resources.

Members are invited to note the report and:

1. Note the progress update and confirmed programme of activities.
2. Approve the proposed weekend-focused delivery model for St George's Day 2026.
3. Confirm support for the Front-Line Services recognition element, including vehicle attendance in Market Square, subject to satisfactory risk assessments and operational agreement.
4. Delegate authority to Officers, in consultation with the Chair, to finalise operational arrangements and implement necessary risk management measures.

This will enable officers to proceed with detailed planning and partner confirmations in a timely and coordinated manner.