

**WITNEY PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE WORKING PARTY MEETING OF THE
WITNEY TOWN COUNCIL**

Held on Wednesday, 18 February 2026

At 4.00 pm in the Gallery Room, The Corn Exchange, Witney

Present:

Councillor R Crouch (Chair)

Councillors:	G Meadows	J Robertshaw
Officers:	Derek Mackenzie	Senior Administrative Officer & Committee Clerk
	Thomas Davies	Deputy Venue & Events Officer
	Polly Inness	Communications & Community Engagement Officer
Others:	Claire Hermon	Corn Exchange Café Manager
	Beverley Sherwood	Witney Museum

4 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors J Treloar & R Smith.

Apologies were also received from Community representatives, Paul Foster (Witney Town Football Club), Sonia Jervis (Witney Museum), Brian Conroy (Witney Vocals) and Tom Hinton (Resident).

5 MINUTES

The minutes of the Witney: Past, Present & Future Working Party meeting held on 14 January 2026 were received.

Resolved:

That, the minutes of the Witney: Past, Present & Future Working Party meeting held on 14 January 2026 be approved as a correct record of the meeting and be signed by the Chair.

6 ELECTION OF CHAIR FOR THE MEETING

With the Chair of the Committee offering his apologies it was necessary to elect a chair for the meeting.

It was proposed that Cllr R Crouch chair the meeting. All members were in agreement.

Resolved:

That, Councillor Rachel Crouch be elected Chair of the meeting.

ST GEORGE'S & ARMED FORCES DAY EVENTS UPDATE

The Working Party received a report from the Communications and Community Engagement Officer which provided updates on St George's Day and Armed Forces Day since the last meeting.

Members also received an update from the representative present from Witney Museum regarding its planned contribution. The Museum would be hosting a family friendly "Build a Dragon" event on Saturday 25 April, taking place from 10.00am to 1.00pm. The session will focus on creativity and storytelling and would be held at the Museum.

On Sunday 26 April, the Museum would also be arranging guided walks in the Market Square area. The walks would be open to all; however, advance booking was required. Should demand be high, additional walks could be arranged where possible, subject to capacity and ticket availability.

The main St George's Day activity on Sunday 26 April would be held in the Market Square. The Communications and Community Engagement Officer expressed her sincere thanks to the Events Officer for his assistance in coordinating the arrangements and providing logistical support.

The Square would host a picnic-style celebration featuring music, a compère and PA system, background entertainment and local quiz questions. A food vendor will serve traditional sausage and mash, alongside a collaboration with Smarts to offer traditional fish and chips. Witney Viking Football Team had confirmed it would host a small-scale activity.

Invitations had been extended to the Fire, Ambulance and Police Services, with confirmation of their level and type of attendance awaited. Bunting and flags would be displayed to create a celebratory atmosphere.

Members also noted details of the schools' competition. The Communications and Community Engagement Officer would be liaising with Councillor Crouch regarding the delivery of materials to schools, and the Events Officer would investigate the most appropriate way to display the selected artwork.

The newly appointed Chair of the Chamber of Commerce had expressed a strong interest in encouraging shops in the High Street and Market Square to become involved, and the Communications and Community Engagement Officer had been in contact to provide further information.

Members were advised that advertising materials were prepared and promotional activity would commence shortly.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, the proposed weekend delivery model be approved.
3. That, members confirmed their support for front line service providers to be recognised and,
4. That, it be delegated to officers in consultation with the Chair to finalise the operational arrangements in order that they proceed without undue delay.

8 **TERMS OF REFERENCE PROGRESS REVIEW**

The Working Party received and considered the report of the Deputy Town Clerk.

Members reflected on the success of the agreed objectives and the clarity they had provided in highlighting the Council's year-round activity in promoting Witney as an inclusive and welcoming place to live. It was noted that previous expressions of interest from members of the community regarding St George's Day celebrations had not yet been fully explored, and Members considered this an opportunity for further development.

In considering point 5, *"How can Witney Town Council encourage community engagement and collaboration?"*, Members recognised that while many families and residents were likely to attend the planned celebrations and events taking place from 23–26 April, there remained an opportunity to further strengthen awareness and engagement across the town.

It was therefore agreed that a post-event meeting should be arranged to reflect on the St George's Day activities and to explore additional ideas and initiatives. The meeting would provide an open forum for residents, community groups, diverse communities, businesses, shopkeepers, publicans and other local organisations to share suggestions and contribute to the continued development of activities celebrating Witney's past, present and future.

To encourage broad participation, it was agreed that the meeting be held in the early evening and be open to all who wish to attend, supporting inclusivity and reflecting the aspirations of the town.

Recommended:

1. That, the report be noted and,
2. That, a post event review meeting be arranged to encourage greater community participation.

9 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Having discussed and agreed the idea of a post event review the Working Party agreed that Officers set this date to allow for a meeting to be held outside in the early evening to allow attendance from members of the community that would usually find it difficult to attend a daytime meeting.

This should be held shortly after the events arranged for 23-26 April. However, the date should be agreed ahead of the event being held so that any enquirers could be invited to attend the review meeting.

Recommended:

1. That, Officers establish a suitable weekday evening date and,
2. That, the date of the post events meeting be advertised at the events of 23-26 April 2026.

The meeting closed at: 4.52 pm

Chair