
Agenda Item:	Community Engagement Report
Meeting Date:	Monday, 23 March 2026
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

Past Present and Future Working Party- St George's Day

Publicity has been issued for the St George's Day events on the Council's website, social media and officers have taken advantage of the offer a full page, free advert in Letter Box magazine. The Venues and Events officer will be ordering two A1 signs for the boards outside the Corn Exchange. A press release will go out shortly and the Digital Signage and the window it sits in will be filled with more information. Councillors are asked to share as much as possible.

Minutes from the Witney: Past, Present & Future Working Party are attached as a separate item.

Great British Spring Clean (13-29 March 2026)

Councillors are asked if they would like to add the Great British Spring Clean to the events calendar. The Council already shares communications from Keep Britain Tidy and has litter-picking equipment available for community loan. If councillors wish to actively do more a small budget of around £500 could be used to support more groups wishing to undertake litter picks and clean ups, or for the Council to undertake something itself. It should be noted that March and the month before is a very busy time with the newsletter preparation and follow up, civic events such as Civic Reception with Citizen of the Year and the Annual Town meeting.

Thames Valley Orienteering Event Request

Thames Valley Orienteering Club has requested confirmation that the Town Council has no objections to a second urban orienteering event in Witney, proposed for Sunday 15 November 2026. A previous event held in September 2021 took place without issue. The organisers have confirmed they are fully self-sufficient and require no road closures, facilities, or direct Council support. See **Appendix A**

Surplus Spring Flowers

The Communications and Community Engagement Officer is seeking permission for unused bulbs and flowers from the Civic Reception to be repurposed within the children's memorial garden at Windrush Cemetery. Due to current workload pressures on the Works Team, this may be undertaken voluntarily by staff as a wellbeing and team activity. The scale of work is minimal. It would take three people twenty minutes plus travel time.

Reducing the Risk – Domestic Abuse Awareness Training

Free training opportunities are available through Reducing the Risk, including:

- “DA Friends” awareness sessions (1 hour, online or in person), aimed at increasing understanding of domestic abuse and promoting the message: *Listen, Link, Lend a Hand*.
- “DA Champion” training, a two-day professional course for those wishing to act as a key contact within their organisation.

The organisation has offered to attend a Town Council meeting to provide further information and outline current initiatives, including the Military DA Torchbearer project.

Christmas Competitions and Sponsorship

Councillors are asked to consider whether the Council wishes to run the usual Christmas competitions this year, including:

- “Design a Light” (typically launched in June), and
- Christmas Card competition (typically launched in late September).

There will also be the necessity to offer back the oldest light to its creator so that there is sufficient space for the new one.

The Communications Team has also been tasked with following up on last year’s Christmas sponsorship packages, seeking feedback from participants on their experience and identifying potential improvements. Officers will be able to provide an update on this later in the year.

Town Twinning Visit – May 2026

Officers are aware of a planned visit by representatives from Witney’s twinned towns at the beginning of May. However, the Town Council has not received an official request to host these visitors. If the Council wishes to do so, it would be helpful for a nominated Council representative to formally raise this and for the Committee to pass a resolution confirming its intention to organise or support an event and what this should consist of.

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 –

Community events and engagement activities promote civic pride and positive social interaction, contributing to a reduction in anti-social behaviour.

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 potential risks relating to event management, staffing capacity, and weather conditions for outdoor activities. Appropriate risk assessments will be undertaken for each project to minimise liability.

Risks are considered low and manageable through established procedures and officer oversight.

Social Value

Council-led events and partnerships create opportunities for community connection, volunteering, and cultural enrichment. Initiatives such as training with local organisations to become ambassadors, champions and key contacts strengthen community identity and wellbeing.

These projects deliver strong social value by supporting local groups, encouraging participation, enhancing civic engagement and providing safe spaces within Town Council buildings.

Financial

All activities will be delivered within existing budgets apart from Great British Spring Clean for which a budget of £500 would be sufficient. Event costs and officer time will be managed to ensure best value for the community.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and:

- 1.** Councillors endorse adding the Great British Spring Clean to the events calendar and set a budget of £500 to support any initiatives arising.
- 2.** Councillors approve the urban orienteering event in Witney in November 2026.
- 3.** Councillors agree to the repurposing of leftover spring flowers to brighten up the children's memorial garden
- 4.** Councillors consider inviting a representative from Reducing the Risk to a future meeting to talk about free Domestic Abuse Awareness Training opportunities for councillors and staff.
- 5.** Councillors decide which Christmas Competitions they would like to run in 2026 and also consider the sponsorship of the lights and trees for this year.