
Agenda Item:	Events Update
Meeting Date:	Tuesday 26 May 2026
Contact Officer:	Communications & Community Engagement Officer

The purpose of this report is to update Councillors on feedback and the results of the St George's Day internal wash up meeting held on 29th April along with information from the cadets on plans for Armed Forces Day in June 2026. Staff will also be meeting later in May with members of Witney Museum to discuss how we can collaborate for Heritage Open Day in September.

Current Situation

Internal teams post event review – St George's Day event

The aim was to create a simple yet impactful celebration, comprising multiple smaller activities and contributions from local groups, organisations, and businesses that can be repeated in the future. The teams agreed that the date, venue, timing and programme of activities worked well, and staff again demonstrated flexibility in adapting to unforeseen issues on the day. For example, positioning the fire engines on the road successfully addressed space constraints caused by organisations arriving with multiple vehicles. It was noted that early arrivals prevented a full staff briefing from taking place, therefore additional setup time should be factored in for future events.

Suggestions for future improvements included:

- Expanding the performance area and including an additional performance (4 had originally been planned but this dropped to 3 when the Town Band were unavailable and we had not been able to find a suitable replacement. Some of the Frontline Services groups have choirs or bands and these would be a great inclusion.
- Ensuring all the FLS crews are invited to the stage for the Thank You as some could not see or clearly hear announcements as much as we wanted.
- Simplifying the quiz format to reduce administration, potentially by displaying answers on a board after each round. Dropping a round of the quiz and adding some audience participation games for families such as Heads and Tails and Shut the Box with prizes.
- Improving communication and running orders for the 1863 team and ensuring they have arranged adequate staffing and earlier preparation for catering operations.

- Clarifying that outdoor seating is not reserved through improved signage and repositioning tables further from speakers.

During the event there were no episodes of undesirable behaviour, first aid incidents or lost children.

Post event, public feedback indicated a high level of satisfaction with the event and comments were positive reflecting appreciation of the range and appropriateness of the activities on offer.

We had an extremely high level of commitment from all our performers and others who took part on the day. Witney and District Museum held a very successful dragon making workshop on the Saturday and Sonia led two fully sold-out walks.

Staff were pleased to see a number of councillors attending and were very grateful for the practical help with activities such as the delivery of the school's competition, the willingness to step in and help with activities at short notice, and the assistance with the clear down at the end of the day.

Of the allocated event budget of £1,000, officers spent approximately £800. Final expenditure figures will be confirmed following year-end closure and the commencement of the new financial year, when costs can be allocated accordingly. Officers are requesting that the remaining budget allocation be assigned to remaining events to cover basic costs of any materials needed.

Armed Forces Day

Saturday 29th June

Original plans were for both the Army and Air Cadets, to have military vehicles and military charity stalls, on the event side of The Leys.

However, as the circus has applied to use the main event field, the Armed Forces event arena will instead be positioned on the opposite side.

The Communications and Events Officer has proposed that they use the far corner near Courtside and within sight of The Leys War Memorial. A request has been made to the Estates and Operations teams to ensure the memorial area is cleaned, tidied and replanted in advance of the event.

Heritage Open Day

11th to 20th September

Officers will be exploring ways of collaborating with Witney and District Museum and other organisations if practical.

The theme this year is: **Everyday histories**

The butcher, the baker, the candlestick maker - what did your ancestors do? From factory floors to kitchen counters, school desks to sailors' docks, serving halls to vegetable gardens.

In 2026 we'll be exploring the daily routines of different jobs, the skills required, the people that did them and the places that housed them all.

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 associated with the planning and delivery of community events, including adverse weather affecting outdoor activities, changes to venue availability due to other bookings, and logistical challenges linked to coordinating performers, volunteers, emergency service participation and catering provision. Lessons identified from the St George's Day debrief included the need for additional setup and briefing time, clearer communication with external teams, and ensuring adequate staffing levels for catering and operational support. Appropriate planning and contingency arrangements will continue to be developed for future events.

Social Value

The events and partnership activities outlined in this report contribute positively to community cohesion, civic pride and public engagement by bringing together local organisations, volunteers, performers, community groups and public services. The positive public response to the St George's Day event demonstrated strong community appreciation for accessible, family-friendly activities and opportunities to celebrate local heritage and public service organisations. Planned collaboration with Witney and District Museum and cadet groups will further strengthen local partnerships and engagement opportunities.

Financial

The St George's Day event was delivered within the allocated budget of £1,000, with approximately £800 spent, subject to final year-end reconciliation. Officers will continue to manage future event activity within existing approved budgets and seek best value through partnership working, volunteer support and use of existing resources. Officers request that any remaining event budget allocation be retained to support associated community and heritage events during the year.

Recommendations:

Members are invited to note the report and:

1. Note the feedback and outcomes from the St George's Day event debrief.
2. Support the proposed arrangements for Armed Forces Day activities on The Leys.
3. Note the planned discussions regarding collaboration for Heritage Open Day.
4. Support continued partnership working with local organisations, community groups and volunteers to enhance future events and engagement opportunities.
5. Consider whether any remaining event budget allocation should be retained for use towards future community event activity during the current financial year.