
Agenda Item: Community & Civic Events Report

Meeting Date: Monday, 21st September 2026

Contact Officer: Venue & Events Officer

The purpose of this report is to update members on the Third-Party Events that have taken place on WTC land over the summer of 2026.

Background

Witney Town Council facilitates a number of events throughout the year on council managed land such as The Leys, Burwell Recreation Ground and West Witney Playing Fields. Officers work with the organisers of these events to review their event plans to ensure; health and safety, licensing and legal compliance, protection from damage to our ground (through measures to limit damage and holding damage deposits) and to obtain their specific requirements for the grounds team to facilitate such as removing bollards for vehicle access etc.

Witney Town Council is also a partner of some of these events, including Witney Music Festival. Officers work in collaboration with the partner organisations by providing promotional support to help maximise the attendance of the event and to showcase the partnership between the council and the organisation.

Current Situation

Past Events

Hatwell's Funfair – 13th – 17th May: A yearly fairground event, aimed at younger children and families. This event is on a smaller scale than the Witney Feast, but still a substantial event for the town.

Witney Pride – 23rd May: Witney pride hosted their fourth annual event at The Leys on 23rd May. As usual, the event began with a procession through the Town centre to the Leys, where the main event had been set up. The main event on the leys included live music and entertainment, community groups, and food and drink vendors.

Witney Music Festival – 11th – 13th June: Witney Music Festival took place on The Leys on the second weekend in June. This year saw the addition of a comedy night on Thursday 11th June, making use of the dance tent already in position for the weekend. Whilst the attendance could've been higher, the night still ran smoothly with a very positive reception from the crowd who attended. The addition of the comedy night positioned the festival as a broader arts festival and the organisers are keen to carry this on in 2027.

Officers met with the directors of Witney Music Festival to discuss the success of this year's event, how the event met the partnership obligations, and planning for future years of the festival. The organisers provided some key feedback on this year and recognise areas for improvement to sustain the festival for future years.

A comprehensive report from the organisers will be presented for 2027-28 budget-setting, for consideration of the annual grant amount as part of the partnership agreement.

Circus Cortex 25th – 28th June: An additional Circus to our usual calendar of events at The Leys, forming part of the Circus Cortex national tour.

Witney Carnival – Saturday 11th July: This carnival is organised by Witney Round Table, Witney Lions Club, Witney Rotary Club and the Witney Air Cadets. The Carnival is the largest annual event at The Leys in terms of site footprint, covering both sides of the recreation ground. Officers worked closely with the organisers to ensure we can facilitate the event and that their plans for the event were safe and compliant.

This year's event ran successfully, despite very hot conditions. The organisers adapted the event well to the conditions, ensuring enough shelter and water provisions were available.

OPA Play Day – Thursday 6th August. The OPA Play Day held at Burwell Recreation Ground was a successful event, well attended by families of Witney. The event was free of charge with free activities, providing children with the opportunity to get creative, play, and make memories over the summer without the worry of cost for the families. A report on the event is attached as **Appendix A**.

Circus Ginnett 2nd – 6th September. Due to the decision to re-introduce football on the events field this season, Circus Ginnett were unable to attend on their usual dates in October. They managed to move things around and attend at the start of September, though those dates caused some operational challenges. Officers are now looking ahead at next year to arrange suitable dates with Circus Ginnett, to fit in with the Council's calendar of events.

Witney Feast – 13th – 15th September: As per last year, Witney Feast operated an additional day on Sunday 13th September, on top of their historic Monday and Tuesday openings. The Golden Gallopers service occurred at 1pm, followed by a "family funday" opening of the fair. At the time of writing this report, Witney Feast are still operating onsite.

Upcoming Events

Remembrance Service Sunday 8th November

Officers are into the planning phase of this year's Remembrance Service. This event is run by Officers of WTC, with involvement from local organisations. Following the success of previous years events, there will be minimal changes to this year's event plan, with some minor adjustments to ensure things run smoothly on the day.

OCC have recently confirmed the high street works are planned to finish on Tuesday 3rd November. Given the proximity of the event, officers are drafting - contingency plans to the congregation on Market Square and walk up to the memorial, in case works are delayed and our usual plan is affected. This is a precautionary measure; WTC officers have no reason to suspect that delays will occur.

Advent Fayre Sunday 29th November

The Advent Fayre is one of the most popular family events in town during the Christmas period. This event is free for families to attend, with free activities for children. At a time when many households face increased financial pressure, this event serves as an accessible day out for all local families.

As per previous years, this event is only possible to run as a free event due to councillors volunteering their time. Officers will be in touch with all councillors to gauge availability for this year's date, to ensure the event can still run.

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 - Community events provide opportunities for residents of all ages and backgrounds to participate in inclusive activities and social engagement.
- b) Biodiversity - Event organisers are required to minimise environmental impacts and restore sites following events where necessary.
- c) Crime & Disorder - Event management plans include appropriate stewarding, security and safety arrangements to minimise risks to attendees and the wider community.
- d) Environment & Climate Emergency - Officers encourage sustainable event practices where appropriate, including waste reduction, recycling and minimising vehicle movements.

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.

Social Value

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

Community events such as music festivals, fairs, pride celebrations, and carnivals play a vital role in strengthening the social fabric of a town. These gatherings create inclusive spaces where people from diverse backgrounds can come together to celebrate, connect, and share experiences.

These events also encourage volunteerism and community involvement, empowering residents to actively shape their town's character.

Financial implications

- There are no direct financial implications arising from noting this report. Event-related income and expenditure are managed within approved budgets.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and:

- 1) Consider whether to recommend continued subsidised use of the Leys for Witney Pride and Witney Carnival events in 2027 for the 2027-28 budget.
- 2) Consider recommending a grant of £1,000 towards a Play Day in the summer of 2027 for the 2027-28 budget.