

WITNEY: PAST, PRESENT & FUTURE WORKING PARTY



Agenda Item:	Events Update
Meeting Date:	Wednesday, 28 October 2026
Contact Officer:	Communications & Community Engagement Officer

The purpose of this report is to update Members on the suggestions for this Council's event and activity plans for 2027.

Current Situation

St George's Day Events 2027

As reported at the Working Party meeting in May, the 2026 event was well received and delivered within the approved budget of £1,000. A small underspend was achieved and, therefore, officers recommend retaining this budget provision on an annual basis. Subject to Member approval, the remaining funds could be used to support the following proposal in 2027.

School Bunting Competition for St George's Day

The Stronger Communities Committee also reviewed designs submitted by pupils from Blake C of E Primary School which had been part of a history project. Members commended the quality and creativity of the pupils' work and expressed support for extending the initiative to all Witney primary schools as the St George's Day competition for schools. It was suggested that school-produced bunting could then be displayed in the Market Square, with an accompanying online gallery to display and celebrate the work of participating pupils.

Members agreed that the wider schools' bunting initiative should be referred to the Witney: Past, Present & Future Working Party for further development, with a view to delivering the initiative as part of the St George's Day celebrations in 2027.

Town Council Bunting for Events

At the Stronger Communities meeting in September, Members considered the procurement of Town Council bunting and expressed a preference for a modern design featuring both the Witney logo and the Town Council logo. It was agreed that two lengths of bunting be purchased at a cost of £374 per length. Officers will action this in the next few weeks.

Big Lunch

Officers will progress plans for a Big Lunch event on 5–6 June. Given the limited capacity and resources available to deliver the event directly, it is proposed that Courtside (or organisation) be invited to take the lead in coordinating the activities. Contributions will also be sought from Oxfordshire Play Association (OPA) to provide a small play day and from the Town Band to deliver a single performance. A budget of £1,000 has been requested via the Committee to fund the additional play day.

Freedom Parade

This is being organised by the Venue and Events Officer to mark the 50th Anniversary of RAF Brize Norton's Freedom of Witney. It is proposed that the event will be in September 2027 although this has yet to be confirmed by the base. A budget of £750 towards providing refreshments and other necessary items has been recommended by the Stronger Communities Committee.

Wayfinding Map Project

A new Witney Interactive Map is being procured by West Oxfordshire District Council as part of a collaborative project with Witney Town Council and Witney Chamber of Commerce. This has the ability to include layers and banners for events, as well as heritage stories and links; this map will increase publicity for town council and community events. Delivery is expected in early 2027.

Witney TC Calendar

For clarity, when considering the Council's capacity to take on additional events, the following calendar provides an overview of the community and civic events with which Officers are regularly involved throughout the year. This does not include additional national or commemorative events that may arise in particular years.

The Council also produces four newsletters a year and holds three volunteer picnics and monthly Youth Council meetings. Furthermore, not all events listed require an in-person activity, with some being marked solely through online content or social media posts. Nevertheless, the calendar illustrates the range of commitments across the year and the existing demands on Officer capacity and resources along with regular day to day activities for Communications and Media and supporting other teams.

Month	Key Activities
January	Citizen of the Year selection and associated administration
January - February	Spring Newsletter (printed edition)
February	Youth Council: <i>A Slice of Politics</i> ; National Apprenticeship Week
March	Civic Reception; Commonwealth Day; Annual Town Meeting; International Women's Day; Community Litter Pick; Schools in Bloom (10th Anniversary Launch)

April	St George's Day
May	Elections
June	The Big Lunch; Great Big Green Week; Drowning Prevention Week; Town Band Concert; Volunteers' Week; Armed Forces Day; Anti-Social Behaviour Awareness Week
July	Carnival; In Bloom; Town Band Concert
August	Town Band Concert
September	Zero Waste Week; Car Free Day; Eco Fair; Heritage Open Day; Witney Feast Promotion
October	World Mental Health Day
November	Remembrance Day; Armistice Day; White Ribbon Campaign; International Men's Day; Christmas Lights Switch-On; Advent Fayre

Impact Assessments

The Town Council has a duty to consider the impact of its decisions on equality, biodiversity, crime and disorder, and the environment.

a) Equality

The proposed event is intended to be free and open to all members of the community. The extended opening hours over two days are designed to improve accessibility for a wide range of visitors, including school groups, working residents and families.

b) Biodiversity

The event will make use of existing cemetery paths, buildings and infrastructure and is not expected to have any adverse impact on biodiversity. Visitors will be encouraged to respect the cemetery's natural environment.

c) Crime and Disorder

The event is expected to have a positive impact by encouraging community engagement and increasing responsible use of the cemetery. Appropriate stewarding and risk assessments will be undertaken to ensure the event is delivered safely.

d) Environment and Climate Emergency

The proposed activities provide opportunities to promote environmental awareness and community participation, particularly through the Council's existing environmental campaigns and events. The use of the interactive Witney Map to publicise activities may also support digital engagement and reduce the need for printed promotional materials.

Risk

The principal risk is the availability of Officer capacity to coordinate and deliver additional activities alongside the Council's established programme. This will be mitigated by seeking support from external organisations, allocating responsibilities clearly and using existing communications channels and digital platforms wherever possible. The development of new initiatives should take account of the resources required to deliver them sustainably.

Social Value

The proposed activities aim to strengthen community engagement, celebrate local identity, and encourage participation across different age groups.

The school bunting competition would provide an opportunity for local primary school pupils to contribute to the town's St George's Day celebrations, while the Big Lunch would encourage community interaction and participation. The use of existing community organisations and partners to support delivery would help maximise opportunities for residents while recognising the Council's available resources.

Financial

- A budget of £1,000 has been requested to fund an additional play day as part of the proposed Big Lunch activities on 5–6 June 2027.
- A budget of £1,000 is requested for the St George's Day event in 2027-28. Any further costs associated with the school bunting competition, including the display of pupils' work and the development of an online gallery, will need to be assessed as the proposals are developed and brought forward for consideration as to whether this cost should be met from the St George's Day event where necessary.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and:

1. Note the proposed programme of community and civic events and activities for 2027, recognising the existing commitments and resource constraints affecting Officer capacity.
2. Approve the recommendation for a £1,000 budget for St George's Day events in 2027.
3. Support the schools' bunting initiative as part of the St George's Day celebrations in 2027.
4. Note the budget request of £1,000 to fund an additional play day from OPA as part of the proposed Big Lunch activities on 5–6 June 2027, with delivery coordinated through Courtside (or other organisation).
5. Note that the Freedom Parade is being organised by the Venue and Events Officer and that a provisional budget of £750 has been requested by the Stronger Communities Committee for this event.