

WITNEY ANNUAL TOWN MEETING 2022

REPORT TO THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING FROM CHAIR OF THE TOWN COUNCIL'S STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

CLLR OWEN COLLINS

This Committee has responsibility for improving the community environment in terms of street infrastructure, trees, floral displays, Christmas lights, working with voluntary groups, and arranging or facilitating events on Town Council premises.

The Committee has implemented and supported a number of projects throughout the Covid pandemic in Witney.

Community & Civic Events

The Town Council helped keep the community connected virtually throughout the last two years. In 2020 there was a doorstep Christmas switch-on, a virtual advent calendar and a virtual Remembrance Sunday video. Thankfully, these events and others, such as the annual Advent Fayre returned to some normality in 2021 which the Council hopes to build on as the country tries to move on from the pandemic.

The Town Council continues to support community events and looks forward to the welcome return of annual favourites, Witney Carnival, Witney Music Festival and Witney Feast as well as others throughout the summer.

Youth Services Grant Funding

The Council set aside a budget for enhancing youth service provision in Witney. In 2021 funds totalling £30,000 were shared between Got2B CIC, who deliver youth outreach sessions in Witney, Home-Start who provide services for very young children and their parents, Oxfordshire Music & Arts Trust who hold music sessions and Synolos who are providing a service for young people with learning difficulties and autism.

The Covid-19 Heroes scheme

The Town Council recognised the extraordinary effort and community spirit displayed by individuals, organisations and businesses during the pandemic which has defined the period since the last town meeting. There was no criteria and awardees received a certificate signed by the mayor, and a badge/sticker to display. A lasting memorial to mark those who lost their lives due to Covid-19 and those heroes who went above and beyond to help others is planned for later in the year.

Britain In Bloom with the RHS

The town may have been in lockdown but the planting across the town still went ahead, brightening a difficult time for all. In 2020 there was no official competition, but The Leys returned a Royal Horticultural Society and Thames & Chilterns In Bloom 'Certificate of

Recognition' and in 2021 it was awarded a Gold Award, with Tower Hill Cemetery receiving Silver-Gilt for the flower beds there.

Living Roof Bus shelter

An important milestone against climate change, the first living roof shelter in Oxfordshire was installed at Burwell during 2021, delivering the infrastructure requested by the community. A bin and cycle racks will complement the shelter during the Spring.

Defibrillator

A new defibrillator was installed at the Lake and Country Park which was funded by local fundraiser Neil Taylor and electricity company Bouygues E&S Solutions UK Limited who we offer our thanks.

Langel Common WW2 Pill Boxes

Following a request to help raise awareness of the pill boxes at Langel, the Committee agreed to install a sign to highlight their importance.

Queen's Platinum Jubilee

A programme of events across the town is being finalised, full details will be published shortly which will include a children's Play Day at Burwell Recreation Ground on 1st June and a Beacon Lighting at the Leys on 2nd June.

Cllr Owen Collins, Chair of Stronger Communities Committee