

## **STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE**

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**Date:** Monday, 11 July 2022

**Title:** Remembrance

**Contact Officer:** Venue & Events Officer, Tomas Smith

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### **Background**

Remembrance Day 2021 marked the first Service of Remembrance arranged by Witney Town Council, previously it had been led by the Royal British Legion (RBL) with the Town Council facilitating. The main differences to previous years were the exclusion of an official military parade, reduction in the number of wreaths being laid and when this occurred.

The exclusion of the parade was down to the requirement to have a trained parade marshal to lead it, and at the time of planning and during consultation with the agreed representatives of the RBL, the decision was made to instead facilitate different organisations who would want to walk up to the War Memorial to pay their respects without the official military trappings, therefore making it a community event.

### **Current Situation**

It is proposed to run this year's event in much the same way as 2021, with minor operational changes which will serve to enhance the running of the event on the day.

Having conferred with the Chairman and secretary of the Witney Branch of the RBL, they have confirmed they will again be helping to facilitate on the day and that it will be a Town Council run event. The RBL have also reaffirmed their advice that they do not wish for the event to be a solely military affair. The Purpose of the event and service, in their opinion, is to hold a simple service of Remembrance for the people of Witney and to make the whole event inclusive for those who want to attend.

The decision to hold a parade or not has not been made, the RBL haven't got a qualified parade marshal and there is no one at the Town Council qualified to undertake this responsibility, nor does it have the capacity to undertake this responsibility.

Individual groups can be organised so that they can walk to the memorial in an orderly fashion with the key difference being that this is not an official parade.

The issue has been raised regarding the laying of wreathes at the memorial with some supporting a reduced official list and others supporting as many organisations as possible who want to lay a wreath after the service has concluded.

Last year the decision was made to reduce the amount of wreathes being laid directly after the service to reduce the time some people would have to wait for the conclusion of the official laying. The Chairman of RBL had advised that some veterans were finding it more and more difficult to remain

standing for the laying of 30 or more wreathes. The same reasoning was applied for people with young families who might find it difficult to remain more than the 20 minutes of the service and official wreath laying.

It is worth noting that there are 11 official wreathes laid, after that number it is down to the discretion of the organisers as to the number included in the official service.

Concerns have been raised that by having just the official wreathes laid it might detract from the poignancy of the solemn occasion and for other organisations. This has never been the intent and certainly not what was organised last year, there is always opportunity for anybody to lay a wreath who wants to on the day, prior to Remembrance Sunday or the week after. A significant number of wreath layers would require managing on the day, a facet of the event formerly organised by the RBL.

Once the arrangements have been finalised, the Venue & Events Officer will communicate clearly with participants.

In order to hold the event, certain key infrastructure is required. The Maintenance and Environmental Services Officer has recommended that the following items and training are required for the Town Council staff to smoothly facilitate the Remembrance Event:

- 30 x Crowd Control; Barrier @25.99 per unit (£779.70)
- Local Event Traffic Management Training @£480.00 for a day course plus £35.00 per certificate. This training would be for Maintenance and Environmental Services Officer, Venue and Events Officer, Venue and Events Assistant and the Senior Maintenance Operative.

The issue of printed order of service sheets has been considered from an environmental perspective as last year the Council printed a reduced number of 1500, this year the recommendation would be to reduce this to 500 and communicate the digital version early so people can use mobile devices to follow the service on the day.

### **Environmental impact**

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 – with this in mind Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

### **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.

The Council has to strike a balance of managing the Remembrance Day Service within its limitations, while attempting to address the concerns of residents.

### **Financial implications**

- As noted in the report
- £779.70 for crowd barriers
- £620.00 for traffic management training

## **Recommendations**

Members are invited to note the report and:

1. Consider whether to run the Remembrance Sunday event as it did in 2021
2. Whether there should be any additional changes including a parade and extended wreath-laying, noting the former would require the employment of a parade marshal.
3. The suggested crowd barrier improvements and associated training.