

## STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

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<b>Date:</b>	Monday, 26 September 2022
<b>Title:</b>	Community Engagement Report
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Communications and Community Engagement Officer - Polly Inness

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### **Background**

A brief update on Community Engagement matters.

### **Current Situation**

The Council is at the halfway point in planning for the remainder of Community Engagement events and activities for 2022

### **Blue Plaque – Alice Batt**

The Council provided £300 to the Oxfordshire Blue Plaques Society towards this plaque to mark the life of Alice Batt of Batt House, High Street, Witney. Alice Batt was awarded the Albert Medal (precursor to the George Cross) during World War One.

An unveiling ceremony will take place on Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> October, and it has been recommended that the remaining £200 budget be used to facilitate a reception ceremony after the unveiling in the Corn Exchange. *For further information on this project please contact the Project Officer*

### **Citizen of the Year Award**

Nominations for this award are usually opened in November. Members are asked to consider whether they would like to continue with this competition in the same format as before.

There are usually two awards – Citizen and Young Citizen of the Year but the Mayor does have the right to award team/group and special awards for merit, depending on the nominees' contributions.

Per minute number SC256 of 30<sup>th</sup> May, members are also asked with whether they would like to recognise local sporting achievements and best kept allotments if these awards continue.

The Awards Ceremony takes place in March at the Council's Civic Reception in the Corn Exchange. There may be a slight reduction in the available number of spaces next year given the new Hall layout. No date has been set for the Civic Reception – if agreed, it will need to be before the election purdah date begins. If the Civic Reception cannot go ahead perhaps Councillors could consider making the awards at another event, such as the Annual Town Meeting.

## **Charity Calendar**

The Council has been approached by a local resident regarding a partnership to produce a charity calendar for 2023 with their illustrations. The funds from sales would be for local Witney charities. Members are asked if this is a project which they would like officers to pursue. There is a possibility that this could be used as a wider community project, rather than showcasing the work of an individual.

## **Christmas Lights Switch On**

Per minute number SC359 of 22 July, the Rotary Club of Witney were informed the date for the switch-on would be Friday 25<sup>th</sup> November. However, since then, it has been identified the England football team are playing in the World Cup that evening, so a change of date has been requested. If a date is selected in time and there is space for it to take place, the Communications and Community Engagement officer will discuss the possibility of holding a Community Organisation Christmas market with the Venues and Events manager. This will offer groups a chance to raise some funds.

## **In Bloom**

Results are due in the next week or so and the awards ceremony will be attended by the Mayor on September 28<sup>th</sup>, so she will hear the result before anyone else. There are some leftover funds this year which will be used to purchase some In Bloom signage to provide information about the wheelbarrows and as branding to use at events such as the Carnival and on judging day.

Previously, it has been discussed that leftover funds may be used towards a large impact project that has a connection to In Bloom, so Councillors may like to consider if they would like that to happen next year. Alternatively, the money could be used to augment the budget allocated to the community gardeners to provide equipment for them that may help alleviate watering problems or provide them with a small noticeboard each that will do away with any further laminated posters, which add harmful plastics to a project that should be environmentally friendly. Previously leftover budget has been carried over or used to augment the budget of community gardeners.

If Councillors have an idea for a big impact community project next year, they should put this forward now so that the budget can be set aside for that purpose next summer. Some possible areas for this are:

An impactful and widely beneficial addition to the Lake and Country Park, Tower Hill Cemetery, Tiny Forest or Park Road allotment area, where the Ranger would like to protect and inform about recent wildlife discoveries, for example.

### **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.

### **Financial implications**

Described here or as stated in the report above.

### **Recommendations**

Members are invited to note the report and consider the following:

- To resolve that the Council facilitates the Blue Plaque reception for Alice Batt in the Corn Exchange on 1 October with the remaining £200 budget for the project,
- Whether to run Citizen of the Year Awards for 2022 and if yes, what awards format these should take,
- Whether to use some leftover In Bloom budget for a larger more impactful community project
- Whether to support and facilitate a resident request for a Charity Calendar for 2023,
- To resolve a change to the Christmas Lights Switch-On date and whether to facilitate a community Christmas Market if feasible