

STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 14 November 2022

Title: Community Engagement Report

Contact Officer: Communications & Community Engagement Officer - Polly Inness

Background

At this point we are tying up loose ends from past events and looking forward to a new year of events, which includes ensuring budgets have been allocated to these and checking what has been spent and what remains in this year's unspent sums.

Current Situation

Witney Town Council has no community events planned for the remainder of this year. There is still some expenditure to be made on prizes for Schools in Bloom and the Christmas Competition winners. There is also the potential spend from this year's events budget for two connected events early in 2023. The Coronation of King Charles next May will require early planning and sufficient budget to cover what needs to be included.

Jo Cox Great Winter Get Together

The attached appendix will give lots of background information about the intention of the following two proposed events. The Great Winter Get Together (16 – 29 January) is the Jo Cox Foundation's flagship winter campaign. Timed to begin on Blue Monday, the loneliest day of the year, it focuses on loneliness and connecting communities.

The proposal is to work with other organisations who have existing expertise and experience to bring together a coffee and activity morning, along the lines of the very successful and familiar Chatterbox event that runs on the first Thursday of each month. The running time would be from 10am to 2pm so that elderly visitors would be travelling in daylight.

We could offer soup and a roll (perhaps working with the Community Larder and Fridge, which will also help raise awareness of these) and suitable activities.

The idea is that it should not be age focused although the older generation are those more likely to attend. Loneliness affects people of all ages. Working with other agencies may make this more accessible to other age groups and the intention is that it should be as cross generational and inclusive as possible.

Officers are proposing to use the 2k sum remainder of the events budget to stage two of these events – the first during the first week of the Great Winter Get Together campaign on Tuesday

17th January and the second on Tuesday 14th February. In this way we hope not tread on the toes of the Chatterbox events while covering the two darkest months following all the events of Christmas.

This event also goes part way to addressing a You Said, We Did response comments made in the Annual Residents' Satisfaction Survey that more events for elderly residents should be considered.

The Coronation of King Charles Saturday 6th May (6-8 May)

There is likely to be an announcement from Bruno Peake, the Pageant Master at some point in the next couple of months that will indicate the scale and scope of commemorative events such as beacon lightings that will be proposed. Until that happens it is probably prudent to plan and budget for a beacon along with other events. Although King Charles has indicated that he would prefer a lower key celebration and is mindful of the cost-of-living crisis, I think there will be an expectation of the Town Council to rise to the occasion. All events should be free, accessible and inclusive where possible, as this will also offset the cost for families who may be struggling. We won't have four days to fill as we had with the Platinum Jubilee so some things could be grouped together.

Many of the jubilee activities were really popular and could be tweaked to improve them or accommodate larger numbers where they were oversubscribed.

Possible activities:

Picnic in the Park for the Coronation – work with Premier Tennis, Coffee Shed and Bowls Club, St Mary's Church, to put on catering and entertainment. Big screen to watch the coronation. Quotes for big screen being sought currently. This could incorporate a Big Sing event with local choirs and groups leading the crowd in singing along. A beacon lighting to finish the day. Recommend a bonfire rather than the Town Council's existing gas beacon. We could work in partnership with other organisations to facilitate this. Voicebox, WOAPA could be the leaders in a Sing Off to close the event.

A Crafting Session for children - Along the lines of the Advent Fayre. We could invite other agencies to have a crafting table and share their skills as we previously did with the Advent Fayre. Cogges and the Church have previously organised activities and also RSPB and some other charities. Perhaps one of the Young Persons' groups such as Synolos or Home Start could be approached to see if they would like to attend and offer an activity.

Councillors may have other ideas they would like officers to explore. They may wish to budget for fabric bunting or a new permanent beacon to be sited at the Leys. Both of these would then be able to be reused at future events.

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

- The Jo Cox Great Winter Get Together can be funded from the remaining events budget in the current year.
- A Budget will need to be allocated that takes into account the potential costs of hiring equipment such as Big Screens or venues for the proposed events, catering supplies and staff costs for the Coronation.

Recommendations

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

1. That the Council holds two separate Jo Cox Great Winter Get Together days in January and February 2023
2. That the Council plans early for The Coronation of King Charles III and allocates a budget to cover their aspirations for marking this day for items such as a permanently sited beacon and fabric bunting or big screen hire, portable toilets etc that might be required for a larger event
3. That the Council consider partnership working with other groups when planning for these events