

Policy and Finance Committee

Date: 17 June 2019

Title: Music in the Park refreshments

Purpose of the Report: To consider how changes in arrangements regarding refreshment provision for the summer Music in the Park programme may impact on local groups & organisations.

Contact Officer: Sarah Sandiford, Head of Democratic and Central Services

Corporate Objective/s	To consolidate processes and procedures, ensuring operational efficiency.	
Implications:		
Financial		
Human Resources		
Operational/Service delivery	√	

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 To further encourage those groups who previously provided band concert refreshments to apply for a General Grant of up to £500 in order to offset the potential loss in revenue caused by the outsourcing of this activity to park refreshment provider - Community Action Bedfordshire or
- 1.2 To encourage registered charity groups to take advantage of the subsidised hire rates for the use of council owned pavilion buildings at Mentmore Park and Pages Park in order to run their own event such as a coffee morning for fundraising purposes.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 For a number of years, local voluntary/charity groups have been encouraged to provide refreshments from the Duncombe Drive Day centre for the Sunday afternoon summer band concert programme.
- 2.2 The Town Council has hired the Day Centre for this purpose and costs are absorbed within the budget for the concert programme. There is no charge

made to the groups providing refreshments and they have been permitted to retain all funds raised from the sale of hot drinks and cake.

- 2.3 As an outdoor activity, the summer Music in the Park programme is highly weather dependent and therefore the number of attendees can vary enormously. A loyal core of band concert supporters does attend in all but the worst of weathers and an average attendance number would be around 200.

3. UPDATE

- 3.1 In the past, the Town Council was permitted free of charge use of the Day Centre. This has changed in recent years with Central Bedfordshire Council levying a charge for use of the Centre.
- 3.2 It has been understood for some time that Central Bedfordshire Council was considering options for the long term provision of care services and the future of the Duncombe Drive Day Centre is therefore uncertain.
- 3.3 Access to the Day Centre for band concert attendees has been through the garden at the rear. This is an informal, unpaved and uneven access which has proven difficult for some less mobile attendees to negotiate safely. Anecdotal feedback is that some attendees do not take advantage of the refreshments on offer for this reason, or they ask a fellow attendee to collect theirs and bring it back to the park for them.
- 3.4 The Town Council has found it increasingly difficult to secure stewarding staff on Sunday afternoons.
- 3.5 The Town Council has long held an aspiration to create a café facility in Parson's Close Recreation Ground, in reflection of the park's status as the premier destination park in the centre of the town. Having captured footfall data over the period of a year, in 2018 the Council agreed to go out to tender for a refreshment concession in the park.
- 3.6 A refreshment provider was appointed for a five year period. Café in the Park has now been launched and is proving hugely successful with visitors to the park. Operated by registered charity Community Action Bedfordshire, profits from the café will be donated to the charity through a wholly-owned trading company. The Café offers quality food, fresh ingredients and the opportunity for visitors to get involved in the local community through the provision of information on local services as well as a "Chatter and Natter" table.
- 3.7 Future income to the Town Council arising from the refreshment concession will be reinvested back in to services and facilities for the local community.
- 3.8 In late 2018, organisations which had previously provided refreshments for the summer band concerts were advised by email of the changes anticipated for the 2019 season. Groups were actively encouraged to seek alternative funding

opportunities, for example by applying for a General Grant of up to £500 in accordance with the scheme offered by the Town Council.

- 3.9 At its meeting held on 29 April 2019, the Town Council was advised of the disappointment expressed by some of the longstanding refreshment providers about the loss of the fundraising opportunity presented by the band concerts. It was suggested that an option might be the provision of a one-off grant. A recommendation was therefore made to the Policy and Finance Committee as follows:

RECOMMENDED to the Policy and Finance Committee to consider possible measures to mitigate the potential fundraising impact of the amended practice from 2019 in respect of refreshment provision at the summer Music in the Park programme of events for local charity and voluntary organisations.

4.0 CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 The Town Council allocated a budget of £10,000 for the financial year 2019-2020 for General Grants. First-round applications were considered in April 2019 and 14 applications, totalling £6,799.98 were approved. These included two applications from organisations which had previously provided band concert refreshments (Hospice at Home and Church Riverside Scout Group).
- 4.2 Budget remaining for 2019-2020 is therefore £3,200.02. Normal procedure would be to invite applications for second-round applications between May-October 2019, for consideration by committee in November 2019. However, an additional or earlier meeting could be considered.
- 4.3 At least one other regular provider of refreshments is already receiving grant funding from the Town Council (the Town Twinning Forum through its four year guaranteed grant).
- 4.4 The Town Council's General and Guaranteed Grant guidelines reflect the legislation restricting what grant funding may be given by parish councils, as well as providing safeguards to protect such funding. For example, groups should be formally constituted with clear aims and guidelines to the benefit of the local community, should have a separate bank account with at least two signatories and should be able to use funds for a specific purpose to benefit residents of the parish (rather than for general running costs). Grant recipients are also required to report back to the Council on grant expenditure to demonstrate its use for the required purpose.
- 4.5 The Committee is reminded that registered charity groups may also take advantage of subsidised hire rates for use of the Pavilion buildings at Mentmore Park and Pages Park (almost half the commercial/private hire rate). Groups might wish to take advantage of this opportunity to run an event such as a coffee morning in order to raise funds.

4.6 Appendix 1 sets out the organisations which have provided refreshments for the 2017 and 2018 Music in the Park programmes and the number of occasions on which they have done so.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 As requested by Council, the Committee is asked to consider whether to introduce any additional measures to mitigate potential impact on the fundraising opportunities available to local groups, beyond those already offered by the Town Council in terms of General Grants, which are structured to safeguard public monies, and subsidised venue hire opportunities.

5.2 Should the Committee be minded to approve such measures, clear guidelines will need to be agreed in terms of eligibility and any requirements to be met.

APPENDIX 1: 2017 AND 2018 REFRESHMENT PROVIDERS FOR THE MUSIC IN THE PARK PROGRAMME

ORGANISATION	NUMBER OF OCCASIONS REFRESHMENTS PROVIDED	COMMENTS
Mothers Union	X3	
Town Twinning Forum	X2	In receipt of a four year Guaranteed Grant from the Town Council (£542 in 2019-2020)
RAF (1003 Squadron) Cadets	X1	
Church Riverside Scout Group	X4	Successfully applied for a General Grant of £500 in April 2019
Hospice at Home	X3	Successfully applied for a General Grant of £300 in April 2019
Riverside WI	X2	
Town Mayor's Charity Fund	X1	
Marie Curie	X3	
Heath and Reach Scouts	X2	
Townswomen's Guild	X1	
All Saints Church Choir	X1	