



Living History Event Task and Finish Group

Date:	28 January 2021
Purpose of the Report:	Living History Event review information
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INFORMATION PAPER

1. BACKGROUND LIVING HISTORY DAY

The Council has been delivering the Living History Heritage Day since, if not before, 2007. The delivery area was spread from Parson's Close Recreation Ground, the High Street and inside All Saints Church.

The event is delivered during October. Weather conditions are not always favourable, and the spread of the event activities worked best on a fair-weather day yet suffered in inclement weather.

Staff identified annual themes and the delivery involved the same level of planning and input of staff as all the events. To date, themes have been repeated, e.g., Medieval, various wars – Civil and World, History Through the Ages (Generic), etc.

Since 2017, the Living History Day event has taken place alongside the charter market in the High Street to address issues of weather and muddy ground and to consolidate the activities. Events to date featured re-enactors, demonstrators and exhibitors focussing on a historical period. Prior to this, in 2016 a History of Pubs event took place within Public Houses in the town and in 2015 an event titled "In our Lifetime" took place. A hybrid-trail took place in 2020 due to the coronavirus pandemic.

No overarching aims and objectives for the event were inherited when the new staff team began delivery of the day. The assumption made was that the day would seek to inform and educate residents about the history of the town or a specific historical period. Themes, such as Medieval history, have been broad in nature with little direct link to an aspect of the Town's history. Where possible, the event links with an appropriate national theme, e.g., 100 years of the end of World War 1.

2. BUDGET

The budget (101/4516) for the delivery of the Living History event has been:

2017/18; £10,000
2018/19; £10,000
2019/20; £10,000
2020/21; £10,700

In addition to the event delivery budget, a staffing budget of £600 has been allocated from the event salaries budget (101/4003, 101/4532 in 2020/21) for the delivery of the event.

3. PREVIOUS YEARS DELIVERY EXAMPLES

2017

In 2017, the event studied the medieval period featuring over 20 live demonstrations of life during the period. A marquee was situated on the southern side of the high street with a demonstration area in Waterborne Walk. Demonstrations included jousting, a court jester, a falconer, medieval cooking, live musicians and a medieval fashion show.

2018

In 2018, a commemoration of the end of World War 1 took place with demonstrations including Solder Pewter Casting & Painting, an Army First Aid Post, drill activities including signalling and training for life on the front line. A World War 1 Bristol Scout Bi-plane was situated in the turning circle with music provided by RAF Halton and Fiona Harrison in the turning circle and bus stop area. Marquee cover was provided for static demonstrations and for the musical performances.

2019

In 2019, life in Victorian Britain was highlighted with demonstrations from Queen Victoria, her private secretary and a Victorian puppet theatre. Alongside static demonstrations, Victorian folk took residence around the market cross, soldiers demonstrated drill and rifle firing and a cavalryman and his horse were joined by a penny farthing cyclist. A Victorian fire pump was provided by Frogmore Papermill and demonstrated to visitors to the event. Again, a marquee was situated on the south side of the high street with demonstrations taking place in the turning circle.

2020

Planning for the 2020 event was cut-short by the coronavirus pandemic and an alternative event was delivered. Featuring the history of shops & businesses within the town centre, residents were encouraged to follow a trail around the town centre to discover local history. Digital content was created and uploaded to social media accounts to compliment the trail. This gave two options for members of the public to engage in the activity: physically or via the digital

platform. The collation of historical information now serves to create a virtual library of information directly associated with the Town, a legacy of information.

4. EXISTING ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGE

The below SWOT analysis provides a brief overview of the pros and cons associated with continuing to deliver an 'event' only approach alongside with the opportunities for change.

<p>STRENGTH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing Audience via market • Established event & audience • Existing delivery budget • Engagement with Leighton Buzzard District Archaeological & Historical Society (LBDaHS) 	<p>WEAKNESS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repetitive themes • Seasonal weather • Audience turnout dependant on weather • Lack of specific Town history delivered in broad themes • Stagnation, repetitive theming • Lack of future vision
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New digital platforms available & increasingly used • Creation of digital content to engage new audiences – content reach/ audience expanded • Content delivery throughout calendar year – value for money • Time to rethink & reset the future of the event/budget • Event location & layout for different day • Change delivery month option 	<p>THREATS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Event location & layout of market longer term • Present day - Covid-19 ongoing impact, e.g. social distancing requirements, gathering, etc. • Lack of direction for the event • Lack of meaningful association with the Town when the theme is broad