



Date: 4 September 2017

Title: Children's Trail

Purpose of the Report: To provide an update on the Children's Trail for 2017 and consider the recommendations.

Contact Officer: Jo Martindale, Project Officer

Corporate Objective/s		LLTC Three-Year Plan – Aim 2. To promote and develop a vibrant town through partnership working and initiatives including management of the street market, provision of town and community promotions, town centre enhancements, tourism and practical support for local businesses.
Implications:		
Financial	x	2018/19 budget allocation and EMR requested
Human Resources		
Operational/Service delivery		
Procedural/Legal		
Risk/Health and Safety		

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

Should members be minded, the proposals are to:

- 1.1 To note the following update report on the Children's Trail service.
- 1.2 To endorse an annual budget of £4,000 (101/4509) for financial year 2018/19, to pay for general promotions and maintenance. *(as per para. 4.2)*
- 1.3 To endorse the use of Earmarked Reserves (budget code 907/9018) to the sum of £2,600, for financial year 2018/19 to extend the work of the Children's Trail Guardian for another year and undertake additional spend activity. *(as per para 4.3)*

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Children's Trail celebrated its 5th Birthday on August 25, 2017. The trail launched back in August 2012, as a series of 22 artworks celebrating children's stories. The trail starts at the Library and weaves through the town centre, with artworks placed in

prominent and unusual places. The trail provides the community and visitors with an inspiring free local outing and in doing so, an opportunity to explore various town locations.

- 2.2 Free activity maps, pencils and rewards (book marks, art cards and badges) are available for participants of the Trail. All materials are self-promoting (i.e. carry Trail branding and links to social media and/or further steps that become content to re-use as marketing).
- 2.3 Annual maintenance is undertaken by the Town Council Grounds & Environment Service team.
- 2.4 In 2014, the Council commissioned a member of the community with strategic design and communication skills to act as 'The Guardian' of the Trail. The Guardian provides year round promotions, liaises with and increases the Trail's Facebook fans, plans and manages seasonal promotions, and develops relationships with schools and other community organisations. The Guardian is currently a local parent with marketing skills who has greatly improved the impact of the asset for the town.
- 2.5 The Town Council continues to publicise the trail via the Council website and social media channels. The main focus is a dedicated Facebook page managed by The Guardian and aimed at reaching and growing its online presence. In addition, posters, self-promoting reward items, promotion at Council events, and via relationships with local shops, the Library, schools, Children's Centre.
- 2.6 The Trail continues to gain popularity as evidenced through increased social media activity and increased use of promotional stock.
- 2.7 In 2016, School packs (with generic branding for use by other groups) were redesigned with a new focus on the Trail as a ready-made lesson tailored to the curriculum. Schools have access to self-print unlimited quantities of maps and art cards, and Trail posters for advertising. The Guardian liaises with the schools asking for feedback on the packs and providing links to online galleries of art cards created by their pupils.
- 2.8 The full annual review document providing information on all work during 2016/17 and up to 28/07/2017, is available upon request.



3. CHILDRENS TRAIL ACTIVITY 2017

3.1 The Trail activities include:

- **Updated logo and brand asset to mark the 5th Anniversary:** All assets now carry the new logo with an enduring Est.2012 message.
- **Tourism video and sharable mini-clips for targeted promotion:** Working with the Projects Officer, The Children's Trail produced a 3-minute video to celebrate the Trail's first five years and showcase the family challenge experience to a wider audience. The full video is available on YouTube and is embedded in the Town Council website. A series of mini-clips, also on YouTube, accompany the full video, for use in targeted promotions on the Trail Facebook page. The video was planned and shot in collaboration with a young, local video producer, who was appointed following our previous Business Networking Events and also features volunteer Trail fans and first-time users.
- **Targeted online promotion:** Dedicated monitoring and a seasonal approach to advertising continues to increase Facebook 'likes'. Since the last report to the Partnership Committee on December 1 2016, likes have increased by 17%, from 650+ to 760+ fans. (*Data to 28/07/17, i.e. does not include summer peak season.*) New features such as the ability to Check-In and to Review the Trail have resulted in The Trail currently having twelve 5 Star Facebook reviews with many positive comments and blogger engagement.
- **Relationship building:** Existing relationships maintained with and a number of local groups e.g. TACTIC, Rotary, NCT. New relationships established with Central Bedfordshire No Limits, in particular the well-attended pop-up Xplorer Challenge days held at Rushmere.
- **Targeted face-to-face promotions:** A switch from a day-long stall at one annual event to more brief attendance at a combination of events including walkabouts has led to more interaction and greater opportunity for distribution of maps. These promotions: 3 Xplorer Challenge events at Rushmere (Easter and Half-Term), at the Big Lunch (May), and a story-telling session at Picnic in the Park (June), have enabled awareness building with locals but also different audiences: regional visitors and pre-schoolers.
- **Expanded schools outreach:** Regular email communications to the Schools reminding them to use their School packs, to contribute artcards to the groups competition, and to promote the Trail to children and parents. Beaudesert were

awarded £50 voucher to spend on books for the school library as winners of the 2016-17 artcard competition with 46 artcards.

- **Trail maintenance:** Paint restoration of the kitten and frogs was completed in May 2017 by an external artist. General maintenance by the Grounds team with a 'go-to' information pack on details of servicing needs for the Grounds team.
- **Website maintenance:** The Children's Trail on the Town Council website is frequently updated to create more of a showcase for the Trail on the Town Council website.
- **Feature Case Study at Society of Local Town Clerk Practitioner Conference 2017 and The Clerk Magazine:** Case Study presented to 40 attendees of the conference. A dedicated article in The Clerk magazine raised the profile of the Parish across the country of The Children's Trail and both inspired and allowed for knowledge sharing with peers.

3.2 The Trail activities planned (August to March 2017) include:

- **Summer School Holiday** collaborative promotions with Leighton Buzzard Library: 500+ Trail activity maps, pencils and badges will be given to the Library for children who signed up for the Library's 'Big Read, Summer Reading Challenge 2017'. The Trail was advocated by the Library during their pre-holiday Reading Challenge and is throughout the summer.
- **Peak-season Summer School Holiday social media promotions:** To promote the 5th Birthday message and share the new Children's Trail Video.
- **2017-18 Schools Packs distribution:** Updated packs will be sent to Reception classes of all local lower and middle schools, and a number of local pre-schools and community groups.
- **Launch of High Level Street Sign (2) for The Children's Trail:** Joining a suit of street banners promoting and informing residents and visitors alike of what the town offers.
- **Ongoing low-season Autumn Winter social media promotions** and school email updates.
- **Measurement of Video:** views and downloads.

4. CURRENT & FUTURE BUDGET ALLOCATION

- 4.1 The current 2017/18 budget is £4,000 (from 101/4509) plus an additional £2,250 for Guardian activity fees (from EMR 907/9018)
- 4.2 The proposed baseline allocated budget for next financial year 2018/19 is £4,000 in order for the yearly purchasing of promotional items as well as the promotional activities and ongoing trail maintenance costs. (See *Budget Allocations 5.1*)
- 4.3 In addition to the above is the proposed allocation of additional funds to the sum of £2,600 of which £1,800 pays for Guardian activity with the remaining £800 funding the bi-annual purchase cost of promotional items and additional promotional listings. It is proposed to cover the additional budget by utilising existing Earmarked Reserves (EMR, budget 970/9018). (See *Budget Allocations 5.1*)

- 4.4 The dedicated support of the Guardian has proven invaluable in terms of making improvements and savings to marketing materials. Costs have been lowered by way of encouraging the use of downloadable maps and extending the reach of the trail to include local schools and groups and improve our on-line presence. The dedicated time of the Guardian serves to cost effectively increase the capacity of the Council to achieve the level of communication and interactive activity that has resulted in a greater profile, take-up and success of the Trail than would be achievable with existing service resources.
- 4.5 It was our intention over this year to review the long-term role of the Guardian. It is recommended that Committee continue its successful work collaboration with an external Guardian for 2018/19, in a slightly reduced capacity focusing it specifically on build on the increasing success of the online social media project and with local schools liaison. Stock management and other interactions: for example, with the Library and other venues, will return to the Council as set out below:

An external Guardian to:

- Use key messages of 'Free Family Activity' and 'Free Group Activity' to build upon growing Facebook followership.
- Focus on local community engagement using the video content created to mark the 5th anniversary celebration, and by gathering content from out-and-about in the community, both ideas and photographs and artcard photography / FB gallery management
- Liaise with public via the monthly competition, reviews and check-ins and bloggers who interact with Trail.
- Use scheduled calendar of activities (school holidays, book and literacy weeks, library events) to build anticipation on social media.
- Draft press releases and promotional writing
- Continue to liaise with schools via annual packs and quarterly email updates
- Take advantage of a key council/community event (e.g. Picnic in the Park) for Spring/Summer presence and walk-about promotion.
- Find opportunities to link the Trail with national youth, arts, literacy and Trail stories /projects etc.
- Update Meetings / Input to report writing
- Co-ordinate with the Library's successful Summer Reading Challenge.
- Maintain existing (e.g. NCT and No Limits) and new partnerships with local community groups and businesses.

An internal approach to:

- Pre-plan advertisements and press releases
- Stock management: Library and boxes at Astral, Mentmore, Pages Park Greenfields, Quarters and The Spotted Sheep
- Display areas: Council High Level Street Signage, West Street Carpark, Splash park, Community noticeboards, Community Venues (Astral, Mentmore, Pages)
- Display areas: Library wall / artcard collection
- Oversee maintenance schedule
- Schedule unmanned promotion at a number of smaller events to continue to raise wider public awareness.
- Relationships:

- Focus on greater high-street visibility through new 'paw-print' window stickers and potential tourism growth opportunities via Listings (paid and unpaid) such as Experience Bedfordshire, Days out with Kids and Sustrans maps.

5 Recommended Budget allocation for 2018/19

5.1 2017/18 total recommended budget **£6,600** to include:

Item	Detail	Budget	Cost
Key stock	Maps, pencils, bookmarks, art cards, badges 2500 Maps = 1238.75 2500 Pencils = £290 2500 Badges = £525 (for promotions and rewards)	101/4509	£2,053.75
Ongoing maintenance	Paintwork updates, materials for pencil/brass maintenance going forward	101/4509	£1,000
Advertising	Print press, Facebook ads, flyers		£696.25
Expenses	Monthly book prizes, display update materials		£250
	Material Sub TOTAL		£4000.00
External Guardian annual communication project work	£150 x 6 days <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools and group outreach (packs/email liaison/follow up) – allow 2 days Promotional writing – allow 1 day Key promotion day event attendance – allow 1 day Update meetings/ input to report writing – allow 1.5 days Print checks / miscellaneous tasks – allow 0.5 days 	970/9018	£900
social media promotion	£75/month x 12 months		£900
	Guardian fees Sub TOTAL		£1,800
Bi-annual purchase of promotional items	1000 Bookmarks = £167.50 (for rewards) 1000 Artcards= £225 (for rewards, plus 50 as group pack examples) Total: £392.50	970/9018	£392.50
Additional listings	Listings e.g. Days out with Kids, Experience Bedfordshire	970/9018	407.50
	Additional spend Sub TOTAL		£800
	TOTAL		£6,600

End