

## Partnership Committee

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**Date:** 18 June 2015

**Title:** FOOD FESTIVAL BIG LUNCH EVENT

**Purpose of the Report:** To receive an update on the Big Lunch.

**Contact Officer:** Jo Martindale, Partnership Officer

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### 1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 To agree that the ongoing theme for the annual Big Lunch event is Food.
- 1.2 To note the report.

### 2. INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In February 2013, Partnership Committee received a report to consider the plans and budget to support three Summer Sunday Events within the town following funding from the Mary Portas bid. It was considered that the proposal would offer “added value” to the town and be positioned within the High Street for both parishioners and visitors to enjoy the town centre offerings. The High Street would be closed and a variety of catering units, stalls and entertainment would be provided plus seating for those who bring a picnic or those who chose to buy food from local food establishments.
- 2.2 The Committee resolved to agree to the proposal and 3 dates were set for 2013. The first event on 1st June 2013 was A Medieval Banquet linked to the National Big Lunch Campaign (a programme which is a national celebration to encourage community engagement in neighbourhoods).
- 2.3 On 1st June 2014, the second Big Lunch took place themed as Wild West Lunch both events seeing in approximately 3000 visitors.
- 2.4 On 7th August 2015, the Partnership Committee agreed to introduce the Big Lunch as an annual town event for 5 years (2015-2020) with an agreed budget of £10,000 for the purpose of delivery, promotion and provision of entertainment for the event per annum. In addition, income generated through hire of stalls etc. would be reinvested into the event to increase the delivery budget accordingly.

### 3. FOOD FESTIVAL BIG LUNCH 2015

- 3.1 Following on from evaluating the Resident Survey in September 2014 and the feedback received from the past Big Lunch events, the theme for this year’s event was chosen as Food. The feature for the event was ‘The Great Leighton

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Bake off Competition'. Working with the Women's Institute, categories were devised to encourage the whole community to come along and bake. Sean Wilson ex-coronation street star, now chef and cheesemaker was available to visit Leighton Buzzard on his country tour to judge the competition.

- 3.2 Local food vendors were contacted and invited to take part. Officers took a different approach to the seating and provided lots of smaller designated seating zones throughout the high street. This proved beneficial as it spread the visitors down the whole High Street providing equal access to seating near all food vendors. 23 different trade stalls were booked and 26 various food stalls were booked ranging from Caribbean delights, hog roast, Thai, Italian and American.
- 3.3 Approximately 4000 people visited the High Street throughout the day which is believed to be the highest attendance to date for this event.
- 3.4 Free entertainment was provided including live music, outdoor games and trampolines, paintballing, side stalls, circus workshops and dance performance etc. Street entertainment included stilt walking, a talking dog, a comedy dinner lady double act and mad hatter photo booth plus much more.
- 3.5 The Bake off competition started at 1400hrs with book signing by the celebrity, followed by judging at 3pm. The winners were announced and local businesses supplied prizes for the winners and runners up of the five categories. Cakes that were not collected were sold raising £75 for the Mayors charities. Those not collected or indeed raffled were taken to the Homeless Shelter.

### **4. STAFFING**

- 4.1 Previous events have been stewarded by Town Council staff. A new Steward's contract for Council employees was introduced. Additional staffing was secured via a local events management company.
- 4.2 Staff duties commenced at 6am with Market Stalls and road closures put in place. To support visitors and traders alike, the information point was manned from 8:00hrs. Staff remained onsite until 1800hrs and additional staffing until 2000hrs. 14 Members of staff worked to a rota on the day with an additional 3 market stall erectors. Previous events saw the closure of Church Square and North Street which had an increase in stewards that was reflected in the costs. A separate Partnership Staffing budget covered the staffing costs, enabling salaries, refreshments and use of the outsourced events company involvement to be taken from this budget and not impact on the £10,000 for the delivery and entertainment of the event.

### **5. BUDGET**

- 5.1 The final cost for staging the event was £9,541 9 (within budget) which is broken down in the following way:-

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Budget for Entertainment and Delivery	10,000
Publicity	1,700
Entertainment	7,500
Equipment	2,291
First Aid, licences, road closures	700
Food and Pitch Fees Received	2,650
<b>Total</b>	<b><u>9,541</u></b>

5.2 The staffing budgets are still being confirmed however approximately the on the day costs are £2600 including stewards pay and refreshments. Plus pre-event overtime is still to be confirmed.

5.3 Additional staffing was used by a local Events company. They provided 3 stewards on the day including one designated driver and for barriers and crowd control. In addition they supplied the generator and van for the equipment. No activity was provided in regards to preparation however their on the day involvement was invaluable and professional. Experienced trained staff, providing necessary equipment and also getting involved in market stall erecting and general trouble shooting and assisting with stall holders and visitors on the day. Our overall cost for this service was £618.60.

### **6. CONSIDERATIONS**

6.1 An event of this nature (by virtue of its size and scale) takes in the region of 6 months to plan. The Partnership Officer is responsible for the delivery of this event and relies on resources from the Economic Development team members, admin staff and Environmental Services team.

6.2 Additional administration staff was needed and hired for 8 weeks leading up the event to assist in admin duties including chasing health & safety documents, contacting suppliers and signage which incurred additional fees.

6.3 The new Council steward contract saw a reduction in staff volunteering to work the event. The reason for the introduction of a steward's contract was to standardise the pay level making it fairer and more predictable to budget for. Previously, overtime was paid at the rate of salary per officer which meant that two people would be doing the same job but being paid at different levels. It was predicted that some staff volunteers would opt not to work. Additional stewards were sourced through the events company.

6.4 The most challenging hurdle was the electricity supply in the High Street. An audit took place prior to the event to establish the exact power points available. From the 17 lamppost, 4 were faulty and 1 found without any sockets. £206 was spent replacing 2 faulty red units and 2 broken sockets. This left 9 available posts however none were located at the lower part of the High Street. Those around the entertainment tent area could not be used due to positioning. All

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food caterers were contacted encouraging them to bring their own step up/transformer boxes. However 5 had to be loaned from the Town Council.

- 6.5 Should the Committee be minded to proceed with a food festival themed event, the electricity would need to be considered and evaluated. Many traders work on a 210v and the high street only offers 110v. The result is that some traders use noisy generators for their hot plates, fridges and microwaves etc. This issue does not rest with high street events only as the market is also affected by the same issues. Until the satisfactory provision of further electricity outlets, it will prove extremely challenging to develop the market offer at the rate that the Town Council would otherwise wish.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 Presently, the Town Council has no way of measuring the added value or otherwise that events have of this nature have on the Parish. Notwithstanding this however, one of the key objectives of the Big Lunch principle was to showcase the Town. From the feedback received, it is clear that the event puts Leighton-Linslade 'on the map' and raises its profile with residents and visitors alike. The same principles endorsed in the successful Portas Bid application prevail - profile raising which in turn contributes to the vitality and viability of the town.
- 7.2 In early 2015, Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) officers liaised with Town Council officers regarding its economic development focus for Market Towns in the authority's area. The 4 towns, the subject of the initiative have been contacted by the representative of Experience Bedfordshire, which provides web based tourist information and promotion of the area, with a view to create a link between the 4 market towns. The theme of food appears to be emerging as a key idea but it is yet to be confirmed. It is the opinion of officers that The Big Lunch event lends itself to creating an annual food festival for the town. It would be beneficial for the Parish to receive additional support for this theme from Experience Bedfordshire colleagues if the food theme is confirmed.
- 7.3 The growing success of the event indicates that staffing capacity will need to be increased. The aspirations of the Committee to respond to the resident's survey in regard to increased events means that the Economic Development Service is currently researching alternative delivery options for existing and new events. Experience to date suggests there is value in building our relationship with the external event company used for this event. The Partnership Officer will remain responsible for the event. Should the Committee be minded to further increase the number of events that take place, consideration will have to be given to the future budget.

Report Author: Jo Martindale, Partnership Officer