

Cultural and Economic Services Committee

Date: 7th December 2020

Purpose of the Report: To provide an update on the events programme and an outline plan for the events programme in 2021

Contact Officer: Ben Bodsworth, Town & Community Promotions Manager

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| Corporate Objective/s | LLTC Three Year Plan – Aim: 2 – To continue to support a vibrant town through partnership working and initiatives including management of the street market, support for local businesses, town and community promotions and town centre enhancements. | |
| Implications: | | |
| Financial | Yes | Allocation of budget for the delivery of the events programme in 2021 |
| Human Resources | | |
| Operational/Service delivery | Yes | Delivery of events programme in 2021 |
| Procedural/Legal | | |
| Risk/Health and Safety | | |

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

Should members be minded, the recommendations are:

- 1.1 To endorse the allocation of £5,000 from the Christmas budgets (£2,500, 101/4511 & £2,500 101/4408) into earmarked reserves budget code 970/9057, for the trial of recorded music in the high street during an appropriate period in 2021.
- 1.2 To endorse the proposed date of the first weekend in June for the Big Lunch Food Festival in 2021 subject to local or national restrictions.
- 1.3 To endorse the postponement of Canal Festival in 2021 and replace it with a film festival weekend on the last weekend of July subject to local or national restrictions and a proportion of the budget allocated for Canal Festival (101/4515) to deliver the film festival.

- 1.4 **To endorse the proposal to hold the Band Concerts throughout June to September in Parson's Close Recreation Park subject to local and national restrictions.**
- 1.5 **To delay the Business Networking Event from April until September subject to local and national restrictions.**
- 1.6 **To endorse the creation of a Task & Finish group to review the Living History Event.**
- 1.7 **To endorse the delay of the Thanksgiving event and to allocate a £5,000 delivery budget from earmarked reserves (970/9057).**

2. INFORMATION

- 2.1 At the time of writing, England is within the national lockdown imposed between 5th November & 2nd December inclusive. The restrictions due to be imposed from the 2nd December have not yet been announced and may impact on plans outlined.
- 2.2 It is anticipated that for the duration of next summer a level of restriction or requirement will be placed on event organisers over and above the parameters in place pre-2020. Officers seek to undertake the most possible within the restrictions and requirements, however, must plan for deliverable events within these restrictions.

3. UPDATE: LIVING HISTORY (OCTOBER & NOVEMBER)

- 3.1 Officers have been working with local shops and businesses to deliver a Living History trail around the town centre accessible both in the town centre and virtually.
- 3.2 Throughout October the hybrid of virtual and within town centre worked well with 255 visits to the Living History webpage and 67 combined downloads of the questions, leaflet and map.
- 3.3 Due to the national restrictions imposed, the trail around the town centre had to be cancelled with members of the public encouraged to view the history of the shops and businesses online only.
- 3.4 The online videos have been viewed over 6000 times combined across all social media platforms, with each video lasting approximately two minutes and have been well received.
- 3.5 At the time of writing, two videos are yet to be released which will conclude the series on Thursday 25th November.

4. UPDATE: TOWN CENTRE MUSIC & LEISURE ACTIVITIES

- 4.1 Officers have been working on musical and street theatre performances to compliment the pedestrianisation of the high-street throughout October and the start of November.
- 4.2 Seven standalone performances took place within the high street with all being enjoyed by those who were present at the time. Members of the public took photo's and shared with their friends and family across social media platforms.
- 4.3 Minimal publicity was provided for specific performances to reduce the likelihood of crowds gathering and to assist with the requirements for social distancing.
- 4.4 Due to the tightening of the restrictions, officers have cancelled the November performances and await further information relating to local and national restrictions whilst considering the town centre festive offering.

5. UPDATE: CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL (DECEMBER)

- 5.1 Plans for the Christmas festival have been changed due to the national lockdown imposed from the 5th November and may be required to change again once updated restrictions are announced.
- 5.2 Scheduled to take place on Sunday 29th November, the Christmas Craft & Gift Market has been re-scheduled to take place on Sunday 13th December from 11am – 3pm.

Officers are utilising the markets layout to ensure social distancing can be maintained between stalls and the market will primarily be for the purchase of gifts and crafts with 25 individual stall holders confirmed for the day.

Officers are awaiting updated information on restrictions prior to confirming street theatre entertainment throughout the day.

- 5.3 A Christmas Charity Market is planned for Sunday 6th December, using the market layout again to ensure social distancing can be maintained. 15 charities have signed up to participate on the day and are required to be primarily raising funds for their charity.
- 5.4 Following the success of the online band concerts throughout summer, officers are continuing to work with two local bands to deliver an online Christmas performance.

Due to the new restrictions, one band has been unable to perform and rehearse. The second band has been able to produce an online concert which is scheduled to be played across Leighton-Linslade Town Council social media platforms on Sunday 20th December.

- 5.5 A trial of the performance of recorded music within the High Street throughout the month of December had been planned using existing lamppost and wi-fi infrastructure. Due to the uncertainty around the restrictions which will be in place after the 2nd December, the costs involved in the trial period and the lead time in confirming the requirements with suppliers, officers are proposing to delay to the trial period in 2021, lasting for one month.

A better representation of the response from market traders, shop keepers and members of the public can be gained through a more representative period when visitors to the High Street are also encouraged to dwell in the area.

6. BIG LUNCH (JUNE 2021)

- 6.1 The Big Lunch Food Festival takes place annually on the first Sunday in June within the High Street, attracting up to 4000 people.
- 6.2 The Big Lunch was cancelled in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic with a highlights of 2018 / 2019 festivals shared across our social media platforms.
- 6.3 It is expected that throughout 2020 a requirement to comply with NHS Test & Trace requirements will be placed upon event organisers.
- 6.4 Within the high street there are many entrances and exits along with businesses who require to operate as normal during the event. It would be impracticable to install the infrastructure required to comply with the Test & Trace requirements with this many entrance ways whilst also allowing high street businesses to operate as normal.
- 6.5 Officers are undertaking location feasibility studies for the Big Lunch Food Festival at alternative venues in consultation with wider service colleagues, whilst also looking to maximise the number of people able to attend.
- 6.6 To maximise the number of people able to attend, officers are investigating the practicalities of running the festival over two days, with two sessions per day. It is likely that 500 – 600 people would be able to attend each session.
- 6.7 In anticipation of needing to ensure social distancing can be maintained and to comply with Test & Trace elements, ticketing for the festival would be required however, tickets would be free.
- 6.8 Officers seek to maximise the audience for the event but must be mindful of the likely requirements which will be placed upon the event.

7. CANAL FESTIVAL (JULY 2021)

- 7.1 The Canal Festival takes place annually on the last Saturday in July within

Tiddenfoot Waterside Park, attracting up to 8000 people throughout the day annually.

- 7.2 The Canal Festival was cancelled in 2020 due to the Covid-19 pandemic with highlights of the 2019 festival shared across our social media platforms.
- 7.3 As with Big Lunch, it is anticipated that event organisers will be required to comply with both NHS Test & Trace and social distancing requirements throughout summer 2021.
- 7.4 Tiddenfoot Waterside Park has several entrances and exits throughout the parkland and tow path meaning extensive infrastructure would be required to ensure test & trace compliance at the event.
- 7.5 Social distancing of 2m (or 1m+ control measure) is impractical to implement or enforce on the tow path of the canal due to the narrow nature of the path in places, therefore, the tow path isn't able to be used as part of the event.

Most of the footpaths around the poplars and lakeside areas are also insufficient to allow social distancing to take place in and around the exhibition areas.

- 7.6 By removing the tow path from the event footprint, we are unable to host the Canal Boats at the festival which is one of the main attractions at the event.

The lack of suitable exhibition space for rural crafters, food stalls and charities within the poplars and lakeside areas significantly changes the style of event which we can hold within the space.

- 7.7 To preserve the quality and high standard of the canal festival, officers are proposing to postpone the canal festival in 2021 with a view to it returning in 2022.
- 7.8 To continue to offer an event at the end of July, officers are proposing a film screening weekend to be held in the paddocks area of Tiddenfoot Waterside Park over the last weekend in July.
- 7.9 Throughout the weekend several films will be shown suitable for a variety of ages with members of the public able to reserve free tickets to the screenings to comply with NHS Test & Trace requirements.
- 7.10 Limited food and drink concessions will be available throughout the weekend for the screenings.
- 7.11 Should the film screening be successful officers will seek to offer a second day of film screening prior to the Last Night of the Proms event due to take place in September.
- 7.12 A proportion of the budget allocated for Canal Festival (101/4515) will be used

to deliver the film festival.

8. MUSIC IN THE PARK (JUNE – SEPTEMBER 2021)

- 8.1 Due to Covid-19, live music in the park performances throughout the summer were cancelled, with shorter, online versions produced. Combined viewing figures show these were enjoyed by over 5500 Facebook viewers.
- 8.2 It is hoped that in 2021 we will be able to hold in-person band concerts once again between June & September on Sunday afternoons beginning at 3pm.
- 8.3 Officers begin liaising with performing bands throughout December to book a performance slot and will discuss with each band their social distancing requirements which will mean some bands will be unable to use the bandstand for their performance. It is hoped bands will be able to perform by observing social distancing and performing without the cover of the bandstand.
- 8.4 To comply with NHS Test & Trace requirements, officers are investigating ticketing options to ensure a smooth entry procedure for those attending as well as providing an area for the performance to take place in.
- 8.5 Due to the requirements for performers to socially distance and the lack of cover which would normally be offered by the bandstand, a lower tolerance of bad weather will need to be afforded to the performances.
- 8.6 A minimum of one member of town council or contracted staff will need to attend each concert to ensure the requirements for social distancing and NHS Test & Trace are met.
- 8.7 Officers are investigating options for the Last Night of the Proms performance which would be due to take place on Saturday 11th September 2021 and will provide updates for the next committee meeting.

9. BUSINESS NETWORKING EVENT (SEPTEMBER 2021)

- 9.1 Due to Covid-19 the Business Network Event scheduled to take place in April 2020 was one of the first events to be cancelled.
- 9.2 Due to the internal nature of the event, coupled with the requirement to mix with a large group of people, it is impracticable to seek to hold the event in April.
- 9.3 Officers are hopeful that by delaying the event until September 2021 (date to be confirmed) the restrictions in place will allow conferencing / networking events to take place with appropriate control measures to mitigate against the risk of viral transmission.

- 9.4 In addition to the delay, officers will be seeking a venue space which is large enough to accommodate the expected attendance and provides good ventilation.
- 9.5 Officers will also consider the requirements placed upon events of this kind by local or national restrictions and may seek to alter some of the elements of the event to aid with compliance e.g. a revised catering offer.

10. LIVING HISTORY (OCTOBER)

- 10.1 The Living History event has traditionally taken place at the start of October annually, and since 2017 has run alongside the Charter Market in the High Street.
- 10.2 Whilst other Council events have been reviewed and delivery enhanced or amended, the Living History event has not. Identifying a direction for its future would be beneficial and assist to direct the future work of officers to ensure the budget spend remains appropriate and activities remain vibrant and relevant to the promotion of the Town's History.
- 10.3 It is proposed that Committee set up a Task & Finish group to consider the future of the event and associated budget spend. The outcome of the group's review will be brought back to Committee for its consideration at its meeting in 1st March 2021.

11. THANKSGIVING EVENT (Date to be Confirmed)

- 11.1 Officers had been tasked to work on a thanksgiving event to be held for key workers, NHS staff and those affected by Covid-19.
- 11.2 It was hoped that the event could be attended by local community and faith groups as well as members of the public and an online audience. Given the ongoing nature of the pandemic, officers are recommending that this be delayed until such time that audiences may gather.
- 11.3 Officers are seeking re-allocate a proportion of the music in the park budget to facilitate a Thanksgiving event for key workers, NHA staff, volunteers and those affected by Covid-19.

12 CONCLUSIONS

- 12.1 Members will appreciate that planning future delivery of the 2021 event programme is difficult and has additional complexities due to Covid. The above

proposed activities are believed, at the time of writing, to be possible and consider recent Covid led guidance and rules when our community is not in lockdown. All the actions will be undertaken in consultation with the Council's Health and safety Officer lead.

End.