

Cultural and Economic Services Committee

Date: 1st March 2021

Purpose of the Report: To provide an update on the events planning for 2021.

Contact Officer: Ben Bodsworth, Town & Community Promotions Manager

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 postponement of Big Lunch from the first weekend in June until 21st & 22nd August and that it be a ticketed activity in Parson’s Close Recreation Ground, subject to local or national restrictions.
- 1.2 To endorse the cancellation of Canal Festival in 2021 and replace it with ticketed film screenings on 31st July / 1st August, subject to local or national restrictions. A proportion of the budget allocated for Canal Festival (101/4515) will be used to deliver the film festival.
- 1.3 To endorse the proposal to hold the Band Concerts throughout June to September and that it be a ticketed activity in Parson’s Close Recreation Ground, subject to local and national restrictions. Cancellation decisions will be taken on a one-month rolling basis.
- 1.4 To endorse the cancellation of the Last Night of the Proms event in September.

- 1.5 **To endorse the cancellation of the 3 Day Christmas Festival and deliver a programme similar to 2020 with Christmas Markets, using the budget (4412/101) for 3D Motifs and seasonal entertainment in the High Street.**

2. INFORMATION

- 2.1 At the time of writing, England is within the third national lockdown imposed from 4th January onwards. A central government announcement on road map out of lockdown is expected on Monday 22nd February (post report writing) which may provide more clarity around the proposals.
- 2.2 Unless significant change happens in respect to Covid-19 guidelines, Council will not be able to approve a Covid Secure event risk assessment if it seeks to follow the established event formats. Consideration must be given to current guidelines such as Test and Trace which together with social distancing leads to alternative events and event delivery approaches.

3. UPDATE: LIVING HISTORY (OCTOBER & NOVEMBER 2020)

- 3.1 Following the completion of the publicity for the virtual trail throughout November, viewing figures of over 7000 views have been achieved for the Living History Trail across Facebook & YouTube.
- 3.2 The most popular video attracted 2,400+ views on Facebook with additional sharing generated by the business who currently owns the premises.

4. UPDATE: TOWN CENTRE MUSIC & LEISURE ACTIVITIES

- 4.1 Following on from the relaxation of restrictions in December, officers were able to deliver two musical and street theatre performances to compliment the pedestrianisation of the High Street.
- 4.2 Similar to the performances which took place in October, minimal publicity was provided for these performances to reduce the likelihood of crowds gathering and to ensure adherence to social distancing requirements.
- 4.3 Stewards at the performances reported both were well received by members of the public and brought festive cheer to the high street. Comments from passing members of the public included "It's lovely to see the performers whilst we are in town shopping" and "It is wonderful to see and hear carols being sung in the High Street".

5. UPDATE: CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL (DECEMBER 2020)

- 5.1 A Charity Christmas Market took place on Sunday 6th December with 15 charities raising funds for their chosen causes.

- 5.2 The market was well attended by members of the public who adhered to social distancing requirements. Feedback from charities attending was largely positive with those who experienced lower takings provided with suggestions on how to maximise their stall space and sales opportunities in future.
- 5.3 A craft & gift market took place on Sunday 13th December with 25 individual stalls attending which utilised the layout for the charter market to ensure social distancing requirements could be met.
- 5.4 Street Theatre performances which had been planned for the day prior to the November lockdown were cancelled to ensure adherence with national restrictions and social distancing guidelines.
- 5.5 Officers working with The Heath Band were able to deliver an online Christmas performance mirroring the success of the Music in the Park concerts delivered virtually during summer 2020. The recording has been viewed 1200+ times since publishing.
- 5.6 The use of the event budget to hire large scale 3D Christmas motifs proved to be well received by the public with many photograph selfies being posted on Facebook. It is proposed to repeat use of the event budget again for this purpose in keeping with Christmas light proposal as per agenda item, 11. space allowing in the town centre.

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 At the Cultural & Economic Sub Committee on 7th December 2020 (70/CE Community Events Update), committee resolved to continue with the Big Lunch Food Festival on the first Sunday in June and relocate the event to Parson's Close Recreation Ground.
- 6.3 Since December, there has been wide speculation surrounding the feasibility of events within the earlier months of summer and a current start date for outdoor events is unknown.
- 6.4 A postponement of the June event until the weekend of 21st August would provide a greater likelihood that the event will be able to take place in its revised format. **Appendix A (attached).**

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 At the Cultural & Economic Sub Committee on 7th December 2020 (70/CE

Community Events Update), committee resolved to defer a decision on the cancellation of the Canal Festival and replacing it with a film festival weekend.

- 7.3 Since December, there is an increasing likelihood that the need for social distancing will remain throughout 2021 along with Test & Trace requirements placed upon event organisers.
- 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. The green and black bridges which serve as the main crossing points to the tow path from the main event site also aren't sufficiently wide to allow social distancing to take place.

- 7.6 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.
- 7.7 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. **Appendix B (attached).**
- 7.8 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.
- 7.9 Limited food and drink concessions will be available throughout the weekend for the screenings.
- 7.10 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 Planning for the Music in the Park concerts is well underway with almost all the performance dates confirmed with bands.
- 8.2 Throughout the planning process, it has become clear that many bands will not be able to socially distance whilst using the bandstand. A revised site layout has been created which utilises the area to the North of the park adjacent to the bandstand, but which allows for all members to be socially distanced from each other. **Appendix C (attached).**

- 8.3 Due to the extended period which the concerts take place over, a rolling programme of cancellations can be implemented on a month-by-month basis should local or national restrictions prevent the Music in the Park concerts taking place. Should the August concerts be cancelled, the remaining programme of activity will also be cancelled.
- 8.4 Due to the additional budget requirements for staffing at the Music in the Park concerts in 2021 and the uncertainty around the performance of the Last Night of the Proms event from The Albert Hall, it is unviable to run the Last Night of the Proms event in 2021. It is hoped that the Last Night of the Proms event will be able to take place in 2022.

9. LIVING HISTORY (OCTOBER 2021)

- 9.1 The Living History Task & Finish Group met on 28th January to discuss the future of the event and its associated budget spend. No recommendations were drafted and a second meeting is confirmed for 24th March.

10. CHRISTMAS FESTIVAL (NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2021)

- 10.1 In considering the event programme in its entirety, the proposals presented focus activity delivery in the warmer, summer months. Given the emerging consensus that the winter months will see an increase in contracted Covid-19 cases, Council will not be able to secure the Christmas Festival in its usual format as a Covid Secure event. Committee is therefore asked to confirm that the Christmas Festival, in its usual format, will not go ahead. On the grounds of prematurity, Members may decide to defer a decision at this time until its next scheduled meeting on 14th June 2021. Committee is asked to be mindful of the Christmas Lighting report also for consideration at its meeting on 1st March 2021.
- 10.2 It is proposed to repeat the format of the seasonal Christmas activities in 2020 for 2021. This would include, dedicated markets, weekly street entertainments during November/December and additional on street 3D Christmas motifs. Online themed entertainments could also be considered, e.g., seasonal band concert.

11. CONCLUSIONS

- 11.1 Members will appreciate that planning future delivery of the 2021 event programme continues to be difficult given the complexities surrounding the pandemic. In accordance with current restrictions, the proposed activities are believed to be possible at this present time.
- 11.2 When planning events, Members will be mindful that adequate lead-in time and

timescales are necessary. This is to ensure that all the requirements (statutory or otherwise) are able to be met in the common interests of running safe events.

- 11.3 Clarity may be provided following the government announcement on 22nd February and updated provided accordingly.

End.