

Report to: Events and Town Centre
Management Committee



Report Ref: E1920
Meeting Date: 27th April 2020
Agenda Item: 8
Prepared By: Events Officer

Subject: Knutsford Music Festival 2020

1.0 BACKGROUND

Knutsford Music Festival has taken place each summer annually since its launch in 2017, typically across three days in mid to late June. The 2020 event is the fourth festival and due to take place from 12th – 14th June. The festival consists of headline events curated by the council and “fringe” events held by local businesses.

Plans for the 2020 event are to hold three nights of folk music across the weekend with Mark Radcliffe as these have become the staple attraction of the festival. The popular outdoor session for families on The Moor is set to take place on the Saturday afternoon, with a new Battle of the Bands competition event on the Saturday night to offer local bands a chance to compete for a recording session prize which has been donated to the festival. A session in collaboration with Knutsford primary schools and youth orchestras is set for the Friday night of the festival. A fundraising town centre busking session is set for the Saturday morning ahead of the event on the Moor. Fringe events are set to take place across the whole weekend.

Due to the outbreak of Covid-19 (Coronavirus) many events have been cancelled for Spring and Summertime. Dependant on the situation at that time the council may be unable to proceed with the festival if the country is still in lockdown or encouraging social distancing at the time of the event.

It is looking increasingly likely that the event as scheduled in June will be unable to go ahead due to Covid-19 restrictions. Even if it were to be permissible, the current restrictions hamper the ability to promote the event and generate sales, which is likely to greatly detriment a June event. The committee is therefore asked to consider the postponement or cancellation of the festival.

2.0 OPTIONS

2.1 POSTPONEMENT

The Events Officer has been working with festival partners to identify suitable back-up dates for the festival. This includes ensuring that the audio contractor Bailey Audio Ltd, as well as key venues Knutsford Little Theatre and St John’s Church, and festival partner Mark Radcliffe are all available on the same dates. The only viable weekend that has been identified is the weekend of 18th – 20th September where all of the above parties are available.

The Friday evening event will clash with the rescheduled date for the Mayor's Ball. This has been discussed with the Town Mayor and the Civic Events Officer. The Town Mayor has agreed that whilst the clash is not desirable, given the unusual circumstances under which events are being re-arranged and in order to allow the music festival to proceed that he accepts the recommended dates for postponement. The two events are very different in nature and the Ball will allow the Mayor to raise important funds while the Music Festival will help to support the town by boosting tourism and revenue for local businesses which will be important for a post COVID recovery.

The Events Officer recommends the postponement be arranged for these dates and for the postponed festival consist only of the main key events which are the Folk at the Theatre presented by Mark Radcliffe nights (x3) and Music on the Moor. The town centre busking session to raise funds for The Christie Charity could also be re-arranged for during the weekend with ease.

Two events planned for the summer festival would be cancelled: the local primary school/youth orchestras evening (Friday) and the Battle of the Bands competition (Saturday). It is noted that the schools are unlikely to meet again until September which would not provide sufficient time for them to rehearse and be prepared for an event; this event would also clash with the Mayor's Ball and due to the target market, likely impact the success of the Ball. The Battle of the Bands competition planned for the Saturday night sadly did not receive enough entries to be viable and would be at greater risk due to being held outdoors in a colder month than originally planned. Cancellation of these two events would allow the arrangements for the postponement to be carried out more easily by the Events Officer.

Postponing the event would be more positive than cancelling the event completely. The festival has become a very popular local event and rescheduling the event will give many people something to look forward to in this difficult period. The Events Officer has noted that other events that have rescheduled instead of opting to cancel have had more positive feedback than events that have cancelled. It will also be a positive way to help re-boost tourism to the town and support local businesses who have been struggling during the crisis.

As of the time of writing this report 253 tickets have been sold to the Folk at the Theatre festival events. The total number of tickets that can be sold is 440. No tickets have been sold for the other Friday and Saturday night events which are proposed for cancellation. In the event that the festival is postponed, ticket holders can keep their tickets in place for the new dates or would be eligible for a refund if the new date does not work for them. They could have the option to donate part or all of the ticket cost to the festival as part of their refund.

Postponing the festival would result in less of a loss of income than cancellation as it is likely many ticketholders will keep their tickets in place to attend the rescheduled events. The wider benefits of postponement over cancellation are that it also provides performance opportunities to musicians who are currently facing challenging times with events being cancelled and supports local businesses providing services to the event and venues both of which will also have lost income due to the impact of COVID. It would also allow the town council an opportunity to help support local businesses who can host their fringe events and help re-boost business after this troubling period.

2.2 CANCELLATION

The committee could opt to cancel the 2020 festival. This would entail refunding all tickets purchased (253), the financial implications of which are detailed in the next section of this report. The working group would commence arrangements for the 2021 festival which could include keeping the headline line-up in place where possible.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 POSTPONEMENT

The financial implications for postponing the festival would include the cost of re-printing large festival posters with the new dates and additional online ticketing platform costs for having the online box office open for an additional 3 months (July, August, September). The total impact is just under £100.

Whilst flyers had been printed and distributed with the old dates the more extensive gig guide will negate the need for additional flyer printing with new dates. Other costs that have been already paid as detailed in the next section would keep these services in place for a postponed festival, assuming the new dates are viable for these services.

The income received or set to be received to the festival at present is:

Sponsorship income	£2,000
Ticket sales	£3,026.65
Ticket transaction fees	£87.00
Vendor income from Moor event	£250.00
Total income received:	£5,363.65

Though it is likely some ticket holders would have to cancel tickets due to the new dates, it is likely those tickets can be re-sold. The total number of tickets that can be sold this year is 440 which would be up to an additional £2,805.00 that can be received. It is anticipated that due to the reduction in events (cancelling the additional Friday and Saturday events) the festival will be delivered under the overall budget.

3.2 CANCELLATION

A total of £1,204 has been spent/committed for the festival to date and would not be recoverable in the event of cancellation. This includes deposits for workshops and marketing costs.

All income as detailed in 3.1 (£5,363.65) would be forfeit less the transaction fees totalling £87.00 which can be retained, bringing the total income lost to £5,276.65. The total in donations received to The Christie Charity received from ticket sales is £73.00 which could still be donated to the charity.

4.0 RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the committee approves the postponement of the festival to September as outlined.