

**Report to:** Events and Town Centre  
Management Committee



**Report Ref:** E1923  
**Meeting Date:** 26<sup>th</sup> May 2020  
**Agenda Item:** 5  
**Prepared By:** Events Officer

**Subject:** Knutsford Music Festival 2020

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## 1.0 BACKGROUND

At the April committee meeting it was resolved to defer the decision regarding postponing or cancelling the 2020 Knutsford Music Festival for a further four weeks to allow opportunity to review further information regarding the Covid-19 (Coronavirus) outbreak restrictions. A public statement was released via social media and local press announcing the postponement of the event from the original June dates and the potential new September dates of 18<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> September should the event be postponed, following which five requests for ticket refunds have been received only, totalling 19 tickets.

## 2.0 OPTIONS

### 2.1 POSTPONEMENT

The Events Officer has contacted all headline performers to determine which are available during the postponed dates. At present, all Folk at the Theatre performers are available from 18<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> September with the exception of headliner Kate Rusby who has currently withdrawn from the festival. It is hoped if definitive plans are made to postpone the event until September that Kate Rusby will come back on board and a back-up headliner has been identified should they be required. Should the festival be postponed, due to the change in headliner if that is the case, all ticket holders for that night of Folk at the Theatre would be given the option to a full refund or to transfer tickets to another night subject to availability. All performers for the Music on the Moor event are available, and essential venues St John's Church and Knutsford Little Theatre are both available during the suggested postponement weekend. Essential contractors Bailey Audio Ltd have confirmed they are still available on from 18<sup>th</sup> – 20<sup>th</sup> for the event audio and staging needs and they have booked us in for this to secure the dates, with cancellation at no charge able to take place up to 7 days prior to the event.

Most major arrangements have taken place to postpone the festival to September by confirming with relevant parties that they are available during these dates and requesting these dates are pencilled in until a final decision is reached. At present all necessary costs that needed to be committed have already been committed, and no further costs need to be committed until the final decision is made at a proposed date of 7<sup>th</sup> August, which is 6 weeks prior to the start of the event. Costs relating to performer fees, venue fees and contractor fees are ordinarily committed much closer to the event and given the circumstances, it will be expressed to all parties involved in the festival that these costs

would only be paid once it is sure the event can definitely go ahead. This means that no further costs need to be paid until 7<sup>th</sup> August, meaning plans for postponement can proceed at present at no further cost to the event budget.

Usual plans for marketing materials can be diverged from if necessary, for example from the gig guide which is usually produced at a large cost of around £700 dependant on printing provider for 10,000 gig guides could be delayed as late as required, and could be sent to print after the final decision date of 7<sup>th</sup> August to avoid any further cost being committed prior to a final decision. Due to the uncertainty of fringe events taking place with local businesses and change in booked musicians that might be required by some or all of these venues due to the musicians no longer being required, a condensed and smaller gig guide could be arranged for this year to reflect a condensed festival and this could be arranged closer to the festival when fringe venues will be in a better position to arrange musicians should they still wish to participate. All events during the weekend are posted on the festival website as a virtual 'What's On' guide ordinarily and this can be utilised if a condensed physical gig guide is produced or as a full replacement if the committee wishes to fore-go the physical gig guides for this year to avoid the potential passage of any germs. This cost for the production of the gig guides would be the soonest big cost that would need to be committed for the event but can easily be put on hold to be printed as late as required or foregone for this year if desired. Other smaller printing costs would involve re-print of larger posters with the new dates and roadside advertising banners which are printed closer to the event which are minimal costs.

Prior to the previous meeting of 27<sup>th</sup> April, the Events Officer discussed the potential postponement with the Mayor and Civic Events Officer due to the clash with the postponed date of the Mayor's Ball on 18<sup>th</sup> September, who both agreed that if this was the only viable weekend to proceed with both events that they should both proceed on this weekend and the clash would be managed to ideally cause as little detrimental affect to both events as possible.

There has been no negative feedback following the announcement to potentially postpone the event to September and some people hoping to attend the event have expressed positive feedback that the event has not been cancelled. Only five requests for refunds have been submitted thus far suggesting most ticket holders at present are available during the postponed dates and that should we proceed with a postponed festival that most of these ticket holders may keep their tickets in place. Tickets have currently been left on sale with 1 new order received during the lockdown period.

Based on the latest government advice released on 11<sup>th</sup> May in the Government's UK Covid-19 Recovery Strategy that public places and hospitality are aiming to be re-opened from 1<sup>st</sup> July with closed door events resuming from 1<sup>st</sup> June, it is a reasonable assumption that some events may be able to be re-started after the summer months and that some small planning could take place for these events. Plans for indoor events could be put into place such as having windows and doors open where possible to keep indoor spaces well ventilated, encouraging event attendees to wear face masks if preferred and looking at ways to enforce some social distancing to take place within indoor events.

## **2.2 CANCELLATION**

The committee could opt to cancel the 2020 festival now and cancel any further postponement plans. This would entail refunding all further tickets purchased (234), the financial implications of which were

provided in the previous report to the committee. Cancelling the festival will also entail contacting all performers and contractors involved in the event, as well as attempting to contact the town centre businesses who were planned to be involved in the festival. The working group would commence arrangements for the 2021 festival which could include keeping the headline line-up in place where possible by aiming to set dates for the 2021 festival as soon as possible.

### **3.0 SUGGESTED ACTION**

The Events Officer recommends that the 2020 event be officially postponed to the new dates in September and that a monthly review is undertaken by the Town Clerk in consultation with the committee Chairman, Deputy Chairman and Events Officer to review new government advice regarding social distancing and mass gatherings. The Events Officer can spend a minimal amount of time making small arrangements until a final date of 7<sup>th</sup> August which would be 6 weeks prior to the new event dates, as most of the major organisational work for the event is already complete. This would allow more time for officers to continue to monitor the advice as lockdown eases and avoid cancelling the event prematurely.

A statement would be released outlining that the event has been officially postponed but that a monthly review will take place where a small team will review the situation and that the event can be cancelled at any of these periodic reviews should the evidence suggest that the event will be unable to go ahead. This is the approach adopted by other similar local events, for example for the Middlewich Folk and Boat festival organised by Middlewich Town Council who have postponed their festival until 25<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> September. Feedback to the decision taken by Middlewich Town Council to postpone their event in this way with a periodic review leading up to the new dates has been met with positive comments on social media and has been commented by many as lifting their spirits with hope that the postponed event will be able to go ahead. As a similar popular event, the Events Officer proposes that the Knutsford Music Festival is postponed in the same way with a similar statement to be released as this would help to maintain positive PR around the festival whilst clearly stating that the Town Council will continue to prioritise public health above all else and still have the option to cancel the event if deemed necessary.

This course of action would be in line with arrangements for the postponed Mayor's Ball where attendees have been informed of the postponement and postponement arrangements will take place, with the final decision made closer to the new date.

### **4.0 RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the committee delegate the final decision to be made by the Town Clerk in consultation with the committee Chairman, Deputy Chairman and Events Officer by 7<sup>th</sup> August, following a monthly review leading up to the final decision date (26<sup>th</sup> June, 27<sup>th</sup> July).