

REPORT TO EVENTS AND TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

EVENTS UPDATES AND FORWARD PLANNING

Report Reference E-22-05
Meeting Date 3rd October 2022
Agenda Item 7
Prepared by Events Officer



1.0 BACKGROUND

The council runs a broad programme of events each year including annual, biennial and one-off events. A number of new events have been added to the programme in recent years with the 2022 programme being the most comprehensive. This report will provide a summary of the proposed events programme to run in the 2023-24 financial year. Events are detailed in the report in date order to offer a full overview of what the 2023 events calendar would look like within this proposal.

2.0 PROPOSED 2023 EVENTS CALENDAR

APRIL KNUTSFORD BUNNY HOP

The Bunny Hop continues to be a popular small event. It is proposed the 2023 event take place as usual on the Saturday of the Easter bank holiday weekend, 15th April 2023. The plans for the event are as per previous years, for the event to run from 10am-3pm with roads remaining open for the event. The event will feature the main trail, face painting and giveaways plus additional entertainment/competitions.

TBC CORONATION OF HM KING CHARLES III

It is anticipated that the coronation of HM King Charles III will take place in spring/summer 2023. The precise detail of local celebrations would be determined by the committee in due course. The budget and workload has been considered as part of the preparation of this programme.

JUNE KNUTSFORD MUSIC FESTIVAL

Provisional dates for the 2023 Knutsford Music Festival have been set as 9th to 11th June 2023. It is proposed the event in principle runs largely as per the 2022 event, with the Folk at the Theatre/Church programme to return as well as a number of other headline events including Music on the Moor and Friday Night Blues, which was well received upon its return to the 2022 programme. There will be a focus on rebuilding the fringe programme hosted by local businesses which declined due to COVID. A programme of music around the town centre would also run as this has been well received in 2021 and 2022.

SEPTEMBER REFRESH KNUTSFORD

ReFresh Knutsford ran for the 2nd time on 10th September 2022. Uptake for the event was lower than in 2021, with a total 34 groups signed up to participate in 2022 as opposed to 59 groups in 2021. The

feedback from the groups who participated this year was wholly positive, with many having recruited new volunteers/sign ups to their activities. Whilst uptake was lower from groups, due to the positive feedback, it is proposed that the event be run again in 2023 with additional time spent recruiting groups to the event. The proposed date for the event is Saturday 9th September 2023.

OCTOBER KNUTSFORD PUMPKIN PATH

Knutsford Pumpkin Path 2022 is set to take place on Monday 31st October 2022, with plans broadly as per the 2021 event featuring the trail, live singing and dancing entertainment, themed character actors and activities and giveaways from local businesses. The pumpkin carving competition will also return after it was featured in 2020 due to Covid-19 to assess its popularity in a 'normal' event year.

The 2023 event would fall on Tuesday 31st October 2023 and it is proposed that the event would run once again from 4-7pm along similar lines featuring the main trail, pumpkin carving competition, entertainment and business participation.

OCTOBER YOUNG ARTIST OF THE YEAR

The Young Artist of the Year competition is currently running, with the competition open from 1st August until 24th October for entries. An awards ceremony will be held on Thursday 17th November at Vermilion Art Gallery on the Stanley Road Trading Estate. Uptake for the competition has been very slow so far, with only 3 entries received in total for the competition despite promotion of the event by local schools to their pupils.

Subject to a review of its success at the December committee meeting, it is proposed the event return for 2023.

DECEMBER CHRISTMAS EVENTS

The 2022 Christmas Market is set to take place on 3rd and 4th December 2022, with plans for a two-day market across the weekend, the Christmas Light Switch On and Santa Parade to feature on 3rd December with a Santa's Grotto to feature all weekend alongside a live entertainment programme. The Community Crib Service is set to take place on Saturday 10th December as a lone event, as the Lantern Parade is not set to feature in 2022. Uptake from market traders post-pandemic (2021 and 2022) has been notably lower than pre-pandemic which may be due to a variety of reasons including some traders moving their businesses online.

It is proposed that the Christmas events programme in 2023 run with some slight changes. The Christmas Market would be held on Saturday 2nd and Sunday 3rd December 2023, featuring the two-day market, Christmas Lights Switch On, Santa's Grotto and festive parade. The Crib Service would follow the market as usual the week after on Saturday 9th December 2023. It is proposed that a trial of merging the Lantern Parade with the Santa Parade as part of the Christmas Weekend is trialled in 2023 instead of running the Lantern Parade as a separate event; this is suggested as turnout to the Lantern Parade has now always been strong with few people attending to watch the parade even despite the cancellation of the Santa Parade due to weather in 2021.

Merging the two parades would deliver a larger, more exciting parade for the town on the Saturday

of the Christmas Market Weekend, which benefits from the large attendance of the existing Christmas Market/Switch On event and would offer a more worthwhile experience for those who have spent time crafting the lanterns to show them off to a larger audience. It would also negate the need for roads in the town centre to be closed two weeks in a row for two separate parades and would save on some costs associated with running two separate parades, as well as reducing disruption for the town centre residents and businesses.

3.0 SHELVED EVENTS

3.1 KNUTSFORD ART TRAIL

The Knutsford Art Trail was launched in 2021 and repeated in 2022. Feedback on the event has been mixed. Few town centre businesses has engaged with the event and recruitment of local artists to take part in the event has also been extremely challenging; the event has also struggled to find an appropriate central location to facilitate it due to a lack of venues available in the town to facilitate this. Marketing the event proved insufficient and there was a low footfall.

3.2 KNUTSFORD FOOD & DRINK FESTIVAL

The inaugural Knutsford Food & Drink Festival was held on 13th August 2022. The event was trialled for one day, featuring both an indoor and outdoor market, live entertainment and taster sessions and masterclasses hosted by local businesses.

Feedback from local businesses has been largely positive, with most reporting a good turnout to their respective masterclasses/taster sessions, many of whom have seen repeat business from these attendees since the event.

The other aspects of the event unfortunately were affected by the unusually hot weather, with footfall levels in the town centre generally being very low for a Saturday. The indoor and outdoor markets were poorly attended, with many traders making a loss at the event. Other market events in the area were also severely affected by the hot weather and also experienced very low footfall.

Feedback from the indoor market highlighted the challenge of the venue (St John's Church) not being well suited to a market and not being on a thoroughfare resulting in low footfall. Feedback has suggested that main features of the event would benefit from being in one central location, such as an artisan food market with street food traders and entertainment in one space. Feedback from the event was generally negative overall, though some attendees noted they were aware the extreme weather did have an effect.

3.3 PROPOSED SHELVING

It is proposed that these events are shelved for 2023 to enable the Events Officer to assess how the events could be held more viably/successfully in the future. This would include engaging partners and volunteers to support the events and identifying more successful venues, timings and layouts.

4.0 DECISIONS REQUIRED

The committee should consider the approval of the 2023 programme as outlined.