

REPORT TO EVENTS AND TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

ALFRESCO DINING EVENINGS 2023



Report Reference E-22-14
Meeting Date 3rd April 2023
Agenda Item 8
Prepared by Town Centre Manager

1.0 BACKGROUND

In September 2021 the middle section of King Street was closed for two nights and the whole of Minshull Street was closed for one night to allow restaurants, bars, and cafes to offer additional seating on the pavement. These post-covid trial evenings were extremely successful.

Amberon provided a traffic management service each evening and each venue arranged its own equipment (tables, chairs, and gazebos). The road closure was arranged by the Town Centre Manager through Cheshire East Highways. The events were registered with the Events Safety and Advisory Group which notified emergency services of each road closure.

In 2022, due to businesses withdrawing at a late stage, only one evening took place which was on Minshull Street. This one event was extremely successful as the public and community, welcome these evenings.

However, for these evenings to work financially for the hospitality involved there must be a reasonable number of venues committing to the evening.

2.0 PROPOSAL

It is proposed to hold alfresco dining evenings between July and September for King Street (individually) and Princess Street and Minshull Street (together). This will cause the minimum disruption for residents and allow the venues to have an equal opportunity to maximise revenue from each event.

The road closures would be as follows:

- King Street from Church Hill to Egerton Square
- Minshull Street (length)
- Princess Street, closure outside the Lost and Found and suspension of parking bays.

It is advised Princess Street not to be fully closed as it already hosts the Makers and Christmas Markets and therefore disruption to the residents needs to be minimised.

In addition to the contracted traffic management, it is recommended that security personnel are hired for each evening and the local police would be given advance warning of the evenings.

The following dates are proposed:

Month	Date	Roads Closed
July	Friday 21 st July	King Street
July	Saturday 22 nd	Princess Street & Minshull Street
August	Friday 26 th	Princess Street & Minshull Street
August	Saturday 27 th	King Street
September	Friday 15 th	King Street
September	Saturday 16 th	Princess Street & Minshull Street

None of the dates coincide with the Makers Market. The July dates coincide with the RHS Tatton as the venues felt this would create additional footfall in the town as well as giving the venues the opportunity to create 'RHS menus' and showcase the town centre's floral walk to visitors; tables could be decorated with flowers.

King Street	Minshull Street	Princess Street
Evuna	Project 53	Lost and Found
Mamma Mia (was Kampai)	Café on the Corner	Dexter & Jones
D-13	La Casa Del Habanos	Koi Fusion
Wine and Wallop	The Angel	Chicinos
Piccolino's		April's Kitchen
Smokehouse and Cellar		Kuckoo's
Morgan Edwards		

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The total cost for the. This covers the costs of traffic management; road closure consents and security as follows:

Item	King Street	Minshull Street/ Princess Street
Traffic Management (per night)	£410	£700
Security Charge (per night)	£111	£111
Total (per night)	£521	£811
Total (x 3)	£1,563	£2,433

The cost per venue for all three nights would be £195 (King Street, based on 8 participants) and £243 (Princess Street/Minshull Street, based on 10 participants)

The Town Centre Manager has approached businesses as above and, overall, has had a positive response. However, at the time of writing, Gusto, Margao, Eastern Revive and Rose and Crown have yet to respond/decide, their participation would considerably reduce the cost per venue for King Street.

The Old Sessions House could also use the space on Red Cow Yard if businesses who use this space to access parking are communicated with in advance.

The committee allocated a budget of £1,000 to support the initiative in the 2023/24 budget. It is proposed this is utilised for the road closure orders (£600 as this cost is committed in advance and in the event of cancellation is non-refundable (as the legal orders to close the road will have been created). The remaining £400 would be utilised to support the event as may be required.

4.0 OBJECTION RECEIVED

One Princess Street venue has put a strong argument against the Saturday or Friday closure of King Street. This venue is concerned that the draw to King Street would negatively affect their weekend takings as follows:

I have tried to explain this before to the council and am utterly dumbfounded that the message doesn't seem to be getting through. Saturdays are the lifeblood of hospitality, accounting for 40-50% of weekly takings. Currently all premises in the town are equal in their ability to market themselves and operate on a level playing field.

This event's sole purpose is to create imbalance to that and draw locals and visitors alike solely to Kings Street on the very night that will inflict the most harm on those not able to take part. I cannot think of a way the council could do more harm to other businesses....dare I say it, but it almost feels vindictive.

I appreciate your saying that it is not feasible to similarly shut Princess Street, so that the SUNDAY Makers Market can go ahead (a relatively quiet trading day for the town, so all benefit from it being held) but in return you are asking us to sacrifice the most important night of each week across the whole of Summer.

With the event in 2021 we lost around £6,000 in one night, but were happy to support as we were promised by yourself that this was a ONE OFF event and would not be repeated.

Instead, now the council are looking once again to go back on its word and recreate this over a 4 or 5 month period. That would equate to a £24-30,000 loss for us and would effectively wipe us out and take away all operating profit. It would massively impact our ability to continue in the town.

I cannot stress enough that however well-intentioned it might be, it has been created with no insight as to the impact it will have.

If it does press ahead, we will have to look not only at withdrawing all support for Knutsford Town council initiatives, as well as the viability of the business as a whole, but will also have to look at legal guidance as to our position on compensation for losses incurred due to the Council offering preferential treatment to fellow business rate payers.

No one is happier than I that you are back in the role Sandra, as I know the town benefits from your passion, but I sincerely this event doesn't happen...as I genuinely fear for the implications it would have.

It should be noted since this objection was received, the number of evenings has been reduced to three due to the timing of this report. The argument behind the threat of legal action for compensation is totally without merit.

An alternative has been discussed with the venue which is to close King Street on Sundays only. This could be promoted as a 'slow Sunday' from 2pm to 8pm and could be held on 23rd July, 28th August and 17th September. The road closure costs would be the same. This has not been discussed with other businesses.

The White Bear has no objections. The Town Centre Manager has been unable to contact The Lord

Eldon despite leaving numerous messages and leaving her card with a member of staff.

5.0 DECISION REQUIRED

The committee should consider the outlined proposal for alfresco dining events in 2023.