

REPORT TO EVENTS COMMITTEE RECENT AND FORTHCOMING EVENTS: JULY 2024



Report Reference E-24-01
Meeting Date 1st July 2024
Agenda Item 7
Prepared by Events Manager / Town Clerk

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Since the previous committee meeting (April 2024) the following events have taken place:

- D-Day Service and Beacon Lighting – 6th June
- Knutsford Music Festival – 13th - 16th June

The current planned events in the 2024 calendar year are:

- Heritage Open Days – 6th – 8th September
- Picnic in the Park – 22nd September
- Remembrance Sunday – 10th November
- Christmas Market Weekend – 30th November/1st December

Outline plans for the upcoming events will be provided in the report below to brief committee members.

2.0 REVIEW OF RECENT EVENTS

2.1 KNUTSFORD MUSIC FESTIVAL

Knutsford Music Festival is a four-day event across the town. The event included four evening ticketed events and a community focused open air (free event) on the Saturday. Venues and businesses across the town are encouraged and supported to put on events as part of the 'fringe'.

Three of the ticketed events were curated by Mark Radcliffe and featured folk music and artists from around the country. The Saturday event was a Blues evening. The ticketed events took place in Knutsford Little Theatre and St Johns Church.

Included in this year's festival were some art elements, including workshops and exhibitions. These were planned to establish whether there is scope to expand the festival over the coming years into a wider, more culture focused festival.

The businesses that did get involved produced some great fringe events to fill the festival, they included Detaljer, Lost and Found, Builders Arms, Oil Art Advisory, Evuna and Wine and Wallop. The rest of the businesses/venues did not engage with adding anything to the festival.

Promotional materials and gig guides were sent out to all local schools and the council mailing list. The Royal Cheshire Show mailing list and the events were promoting on social media.

An administration mix-up meant the TEN applications for the sale of alcohol at the St Johns Church and Music on the Moor was not submitted in time. This prevented the sale of alcohol and has had an impact on income.

Overall support from the businesses could be improved and officers will work to increase engagement for the 2025 event.

Despite the weather MOTM had a good turnout. The introduction of the Noodle Performance Arts workshops worked very well and increased the number of people on The Moor. Crafts were very well received with over 60 people participating and provided a much more structured activity with great feedback from the parents.

Art workshops were a good addition, with one selling out within a week. This is something that will be built on for next year's festival.

The venues for events continue to create some challenges for the festival. The cost for using St John's Church has increased almost 50% and it is no longer possible to hire it for a Saturday evening. Knutsford Little Theatre was used for three events. The council had planned to host an event at the Courthouse which was not available. Options for town centre venues will continue to be explored.

The three events at Knutsford Little Theatre were undersold with the first folk event only selling 46/100, the Blues event selling 84/100 (this is a similar number to previous events in a smaller venue for this event) and the final folk night selling 70/100. The Folk at the Church event sold 141 tickets which was a good level of sales. The lower sales at the two folk events is unusual, as these have previously sold well. It was notable that the festival clashed with Father's Day, Middlewich FAB and the Knutsford Primary Schools Ball all of which may have contributed to slower sales.

Final invoices are currently awaited and a final account will be presented in the IE reports for the next meeting. The result of the lower sales and the loss of sales from not having an alcohol licence is that the event will be c. £750 above budget (the net expenditure will be in line with previous years i.e. c. £6k).

Feedback is still invited from visitors and partners. Feedback from one of the art workshops was particularly positive "you've truly started something and given my little business the boost it needed" and from a local business likewise "Thank you so much for all the kind help and support you gave to the gallery. We really enjoyed being part of the festival and appreciated the exposure you provided on your platforms."

Other feedback has raised the need for improved promotion citing that some people did not know the event was happening and a suggestion reviewing the content of the Gig Guides. Visitors to the ticketed events said that they felt some people had not been aware of the festival and that there was some confusion as to whether it was solely a folk festival or not. Ensuring a greater diversity of genres will be addressed in 2025.

2.2 D-DAY SERVICE

The service and beacon lighting took place on Thursday 6th June with a reasonable turnout. The service was led by the Town Mayor, his chaplain and cadet and was well received. There was a minor

operational hitch with the recorded bugle not working on the PA system. The beacon lit well and one group did paint pebbles, though this was not widely taken up due to the short notice period. The budget for the event was not utilised.

3.0 FORTHCOMING EVENTS

3.1 HERITAGE OPEN DAYS

Work on Heritage Open Days is well underway. Officers have invited contributions from the local community and had several organisers forthcoming. As things stand, there are 13 different events that will take place. Several of them will take place more than once and officers are working to ensure that events are spaced out over the three-day period of 6th, 7th and 8th September in order to maximise the number of people at each event and provide the public with a wide range of opportunities.

All events will be free of charge to the public with event organisers offering their services for free. A sample of events is as follows:

- Courthouse Tour including the underground cells
- A walking tour of coaching inns
- A talk about the Egerton link to Knutsford schools to take place in the Old School.
- Entry to Tabley House
- Booths Park Tour & Walk

The deadline for all organisers to submit their information is June 26th. Work will then commence on uploading events to the national Heritage Open Days website and the creation of a printed guide to distributed throughout the town. Using funding from the Shared Prosperity Fund, Bella Design have been commissioned to develop promotional materials to which can be used annually including poster templates and event displays.

3.2 PICNIC IN THE PARK

Now named “Picnic in the Park” plans are coming together with the hope to create an event focused with an open-air theatre performance (details to be confirmed). This will be the main focal point of the site with a designated ‘picnic’ area in front of the stage.

Local community groups and businesses have been approached to join up to provide additional entertainment/activity stalls around the site. For example, a bake-off tent – visitors bring their ‘birthday cake’ for the town council and present it to be judged by a community group (WI or girl guides) and a business (Tea Rooms/Cranford café)

A license has been submitted for the event and a TENS licence has been applied for to ensure that we can have vendors selling refreshments.

The event is also planned to host a ‘dunk the mayor’ set up however the Fire Service is unable to confirm his until nearer the time.

4.0 DECISIONS REQUIRED

Report for information, no formal decisions are required. Feedback/ideas on recent and upcoming events is invited.