

REPORT TO EVENTS COMMITTEE

RECENT AND FORTHCOMING EVENTS OCTOBER 2026



Report Reference E-26-03
Meeting Date 5th October 2026
Agenda Item 6
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

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

- Knutsford Movies on the Moor
- Knutsford Picnic in the Park
- Paint Knutsford
- Knutsford Heritage Open Days

The next events in the programme are:

- Knutsford Pumpkin Path
- Knutsford Lights Switch on
- Knutsford Christmas Market

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 MOVIES ON THE MOOR

Movies on the Moor took place on Saturday 11 July on The Moor. This was the second year of the event, and for the first time it was extended into a full-day programme with three film screenings. The event was sponsored by NFU Mutual.

The event was designed to provide a free, family-friendly activity for the community, encourage people to spend time together and support the use of The Moor as a community space. It also provided an opportunity to support the town centre by attracting visitors who could make use of local shops, cafés and restaurants.

Attendance and Feedback

The event attracted approximately 400 people throughout the day, with a mixture of young families, couples and groups of friends attending the different screenings. The introduction of three films helped broaden the appeal of the event and provided activities for different age groups. Overall feedback from attendees was positive and the event was considered a success. The support of volunteers, sponsors and event partners also contributed positively to the delivery of the event.

Financial Performance

The net budget for Movies on the Moor was £2,000.

- Total expenditure: £3,852
- Total income: £1,790
- Net expenditure: £2,062

The strong attendance and community benefit demonstrate good value for a free community event. Increasing sponsorship, advertising and bar income could reduce the net cost in future years.

Key Issues

The main challenges related to the screen supplier, including changes to the quotation, technical issues and communication in the lead-up to the event.

There were also some issues with the display of advertising, a delayed start to the second film and the cancellation of one food trader. A significant amount of waste was generated, requiring additional staff time to transport waste back to the Council Offices for disposal.

Improvements for 2027

It is recommended that Movies on the Moor continues as an annual event, with the following improvements:

- Review the screen supplier arrangements to ensure value for money, clear communication and reliable technical delivery.
- Confirm all supplier requirements and costs at an earlier stage to reduce the risk of additional expenditure.
- Review access to The Moor, particularly the overgrown trees which made access for the cinema equipment more difficult (this has been raised with Cheshire East Council)
- Review waste management arrangements and consider additional bins or a dedicated waste collection service.
- Set clear deadlines for sponsor and advertising material to ensure all content is received and tested before the event.
- Continue to work with volunteers, sponsors and event partners, whose support was valuable to the success of the event.
- Retain the portable toilets, which were a positive addition and encouraged people to remain on site for longer.

Conclusion

Movies on the Moor was a successful event which achieved its key objectives. The introduction of three screenings provided a broader programme and helped attract approximately 400 attendees throughout the day.

From an events team perspective, the event was well received by the public and demonstrated that there is a strong appetite for a free outdoor cinema event in Knutsford. While there were several operational challenges, these were successfully managed and did not prevent the event from taking place safely.

2.2 PICNIC IN THE PARK

Picnic in the Park took place on Sunday 26th July at St Helena's Field, Longridge. The event is designed to provide an accessible community event for residents in the Longridge area and help bridge the perceived gap between Longridge and the rest of the town.

The event included a range of free and low-cost activities, including community stalls, children's crafts, outdoor theatre, a climbing wall, a community dog show, BBQ and refreshments. Local community groups were also encouraged to attend and use the event to promote their services and engage with residents.

Attendance and Feedback

Attendance was significantly lower than anticipated, with approximately 50 people attending throughout the day. Persistent heavy rain during set-up and the morning is considered to have had a significant impact on attendance, although conditions improved during the afternoon.

Feedback from those who attended was positive, with residents particularly valuing having a community event within Longridge and the availability of free and affordable activities. Community groups also reported positive networking opportunities and connections with residents and other organisations.

Financial Performance

The net budget for the event was £3,000

- Total expenditure: £2,414
- Total income: £106
- Net expenditure of £2,308.

The level of attendance is not commensurate with the level of expenditure and the event is not considered sustainable in its present format.

Key Issues

The main challenge was low attendance. While poor weather undoubtedly contributed, feedback suggests that the event is not currently achieving the level of engagement from the local community required to make the event successful.

Changes for 2027

It is recommended that the event is reviewed and delivered again in 2027, with changes made to the timing, promotion and activity programme. Consideration should be given to:

- Holding the event on a different day, potentially on the afternoon of the last day of the school term, to better target families.
- Working directly with local schools to promote the event to children and families and build excitement in advance.
- Increasing targeted promotion within Longridge, including door-to-door leaflet distribution, local banners, community groups and schools.

- Making it much clearer in all marketing that activities are free or low cost, with messaging aimed directly at families and children.
- Reviewing larger expenditure items, particularly the theatre provision, and considering whether the budget could instead support a greater number of low-cost activities.
- Introducing affordable family activities such as a bouncy castle, lawn games and smaller traditional fairground stalls.
- Reviewing the site layout to create a more compact and vibrant event space.
- Working with local residents and community groups to identify activities and timings that would best suit the Longridge community

Conclusion

The events team considers that the event met its wider objective of providing a dedicated community event in Longridge and helping to bridge the perceived gap between Longridge and the rest of Knutsford. Those who attended responded positively, and there is clear evidence that the event provides something valued by the local community.

However, the event is currently not attracting sufficient attendance for the level of expenditure involved, and the return on investment is therefore not favourable. While the poor weather affected this year's attendance, there are also clear opportunities to improve local engagement and ensure the event reaches its intended audience.

It is therefore recommended that Picnic in the Park is given another opportunity in 2027, but with a revised approach to timing, marketing and expenditure. By working more directly with local schools and community groups, clearly promoting the free and low-cost nature of the event, and replacing some of the larger expenditure items with a greater number of affordable family activities, there is potential to increase attendance while reducing the overall cost of delivery.

2.3 PAINT KNUTSFORD

Paint Knutsford 2026 took place on Sunday 16th August and was a successful celebration of art and creativity in the town centre. The event brought together local and visiting artists, businesses, residents and visitors, with artists painting throughout the town and creating a lively atmosphere.

This year also saw the introduction of two new elements: Little Artists on The Moor, offering free creative activities for children, and a Life Art Class at Wallwood. These additions helped broaden the appeal of the event and provided activities for different age groups.

The exhibition of all art work was then displayed at Knutsford Heritage Centre for two weeks after the event, allowing members of the public to visit and see the whole collection.

Attendance and Feedback

The event saw 38 participating artists, with approximately 150 people attending the judging and awards ceremony.

Feedback from artists, volunteers and visitors was very positive. The atmosphere throughout the town was particularly well received, and the additional activities were considered a strong addition to the programme.

The Life Art Class was particularly successful, selling 25 tickets, while the children's activities on The Moor attracted families throughout the session.

Financial Performance

Paint Knutsford 2026 was delivered at near zero cost. The approved net budget for the event was £0

- Total income: £1,427
- Total expenditure: £1,517
- Net Expenditure: £90

A total of £650 in sponsorship was secured from Tatton Perk, Cygnet/Tabley House and King Street Dental. Additional income came from artist registrations, Life Art Class tickets and refreshments. The additional sponsorship funded the subsidy for the life art class.

Key Issues

Although the event was successful, a number of areas have been identified for improvement. Staffing and event-day capacity: The small events team was stretched during set-up and at key points throughout the day. Additional event-day support would help with the practical running of the event and allow the team to focus on visitor experience and coordination.

Judging process: The judging and awards process was the main area identified for development. Receiving artwork, coordinating judges and managing the judging process felt somewhat chaotic. A clearer structure, with agreed criteria, timings and responsibilities, would improve the process.

Information and wayfinding: A digital visitor map and clearer information for artists and visitors would help people navigate the event and find participating artists and activities more easily.

Continued development: As the event grows, consideration will need to be given to how the programme can be developed without placing additional pressure on the existing events team.

Improvement for 2027

For future Paint Knutsford events, it is recommended that:

- Additional event-day staffing is planned, particularly for set-up, judging and key operational periods.
- The judging process is reviewed and formalised, with clear judging criteria, timings, roles and responsibilities agreed in advance.
- A digital event map is introduced to help visitors locate artists, activities and key event locations.
- Artist and visitor information is reviewed and improved, ensuring key information is clear and easily accessible before and during the event.
- The children's activities and Life Art Class are continued given the positive response and their ability to broaden the event's appeal.
- The Heritage Centre exhibition is reviewed following the event, with consideration given to developing this into a larger part of the programme in future years.
- The overall growth of the event is monitored, particularly in relation to staffing, resources and budget, to ensure it remains manageable and financially sustainable.

Conclusion

Overall, Paint Knutsford 2026 was a successful and well-received event, with positive feedback from artists, visitors and volunteers and a small financial surplus. The introduction of the children's activities and Life Art Class added further variety and helped broaden the event's appeal.

There are clear opportunities to improve the operational side of the event, particularly the judging process, staffing and visitor information. Addressing these areas should help ensure that Paint Knutsford can continue to grow while remaining well organised, financially sustainable and manageable for the Events Team.

2.4 KNUTSFORD HERITAGE OPEN DAYS

Knutsford's Heritage Open Days programme took place from 11–20 September, with 17 events and activities delivered across the town, almost double the previous year. The programme was very well received, with all bookable activities selling out and strong attendance across the talks, tours, workshops and exhibitions. Feedback was particularly positive, with visitors praising the variety of the programme and several events attracting visitors from outside Knutsford. Demand for some tours resulted in additional sessions being added, while the St Cross Bell Tower tours generated further interest in future dates.

The Town Council directly organised Knutsford Through Film & Postcards, which attracted 63 visitors across two days and received excellent feedback, with visitors describing it as “fascinating and nostalgic”. The council also coordinated Heritage Open Day activities at Knutsford Market Hall, including the sold-out willow weaving workshop and family-friendly creative activities. The willow weaving workshop attracted attendees from as far as Leeds, Stafford and Manchester.

Financial Performance

A budget of £500 was allocated for the 2026 Heritage Open Days programme. Total expenditure was £467.

Improvement for 2027

For 2027 it is intended to continue to look to grow the programme with partners and identify opportunities based on the national theme. It is suggested that additional budget is made available for delivering additional activity in the programme.

3.0 FORTHCOMING EVENTS

3.1 PUMPKIN PATH

Knutsford Pumpkin Path will take place on Friday 30th October, with King Street closed to traffic for the duration of the event. There are several changes to this year's event, with improvements being made to traffic management and the visitor experience.

Traffic management arrangements have been strengthened this year, with the council appointing a dedicated traffic management company to manage the road closures. Trained operatives and vehicles will be positioned at a number of key points throughout the event to help manage traffic and reduce congestion.

Church Hill will be closed from the junction near Lost and Found. This is intended to prevent vehicles from turning onto Church Hill without realising that the road is closed further along, which previously resulted in vehicles having to turn around and contributed to traffic backlogs.

Trained traffic management operatives and volunteers will also be positioned on Adams Hill, Moorside and at King Street Car Park to help manage traffic flow and keep vehicles moving as efficiently as possible.

Wallwood will also have a slightly different layout and decoration this year, with several new photo opportunities planned to encourage visitors to explore the area and provide additional points of interest throughout the Pumpkin Path.

3.2 KNUTSFORD LIGHTS SWITCH ON AND LANTERN PARADE

The Knutsford Christmas Lights Switch On and Lantern Parade will take place on Saturday 21 November 2026.

Two free lantern making workshops will take place at the Council Offices on the morning of the event. There will be 44 places available, with bookings opening on 12th October.

Princess Street and Canute Place will be closed from 12pm on the Saturday to allow preparations for the Lights Switch On to take place. Food and drink traders will be onsite and ready to trade from 4pm.

The Lantern Parade will follow a slightly different route this year. The initial meeting point will be Knutsford Train Station car park, before the parade travels along King Street, up Church Hill and onto Princess Street. Knutsford Rotary Club will facilitate the rolling road closure for the parade.

Volunteer recruitment has now begun, with several safety measures planned to support the parade. Volunteers will be positioned at the front and back of the parade with clear signs asking people not to join the parade. Additional volunteers will be asked to walk alongside the procession to help manage the route and ensure the safety of participants. Chester Brass Band will lead the parade.

The Lights Switch On will include performances from all four primary schools, as well as SMB Dance. Silk Radio will host the event, with Katy and Adam Rickett joining the Town Mayor to switch on the Christmas lights.

Savills have sponsored this years event.

Cheshire East Council has introduced road closure charges for this event (and the Christmas Market) for the first time, stating there is a significant element of commercial activity. The Town Clerk is working with the Macclesfield Town Clerk on behalf of Town Councils to challenge the change in policy.

3.3 KNUTSFORD CHRISTMAS MARKET

The Knutsford Christmas Market will take place on the first weekend of December, with the market open from 12pm–6pm on Saturday 5th and 11am–4pm on Sunday 6th. The full length of Princess Street will be closed to traffic from 6am until 8pm on both days to allow for event set-up, trading and dismantling.

The market will run along the full length of Princess Street and into Princess Street Car Park, with a dedicated food court area located in Silk Mill Car Park.

Planning and preparations for the Christmas Market are well underway, with all market trader spaces now booked. Invoices have been issued and the administration team is currently following up on any outstanding payments.

Princess Street Car Park will also host a range of additional Christmas activities, including market entertainment, a gingerbread stall, a Christmas photo opportunity and Santa's Grotto.

St Vincent's Primary School has confirmed that they will host the Santa's Grotto on Sunday. A group is still being sought to host the Grotto on Saturday.