

Agenda item number: 5b
Date of meeting: 10th December 2018

THATCHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Events Committee

Report by: Mel Alexander

Job Title: Town Clerk

Subject: Review of Thatcham Festival

1 Purpose of Report

For Committee to consider feedback from the Town Clerk regarding the future delivery of Thatcham Festival.

2 Background

The first Thatcham Festival [then Thatcham Festival of the Arts] was held in 2001. It ran for 3 days over a weekend and included 16 events.

Over the years the Festival has expanded and extended and since 2013 has been held for 14 consecutive days. The Festival has always been held in October.

3 Details of project

i. Reliance on Officers

Thatcham Festival is solely reliant on the goodwill Officers, without which the Festival could not operate. As the Festival has expanded this reliance on Officers has become unreasonable and impacts greatly on the day-to-day operation of the Town Council, not only during the Festival period but in preparation for and in the weeks afterwards as Senior Officers take the lieu time earned.

Similar Arts Festivals operate across the country, however, the majority are run by the community and not by local authorities.

I am certainly not suggesting the Town Council withdraws the Festival, but it needs to lessen the demands on Officers and also seek greater community involvement.

ii. Reduction in duration

Due to the impact on Officer's time (as per item 3i above) it is recommended that the Festival be restricted to a maximum of 9 days (Saturday to Sunday inclusive).

iii. Demographics and attendance

Thattham Festival currently attracts only a limited demographic with the majority of attendees in the age bracket 50 – 70.

The average attendance numbers are:

- for workshops; under 20
- for talks; 40 to 50
- for concerts; 60 to 100

iv. Aims

The adopted aims of Thattham Festival are, to:

- Promote local organisations/clubs which are involved in arts and leisure
- Stimulate community involvement
- Raise the profile of the town
- Promote the town's community venues
- Ensure that the Festival is inclusive - entry has been free to the majority of events and the idea of different groups working co-operatively together to stimulate community involvement has been the underpinning objective since the first Festival was planned. Any exceptions to the free entry rule would be clearly indicated in the programme.

Council should review the aims to ensure Thattham Festival delivers the Council's desire.

4 Financial Implications

Thattham Festival 2018 cost almost £18,000 to deliver. With 25% of the Community and Civic Manager's (Jennie) time and 15% of the Community and Civic Officer's (Georgina) time spent on organizing it.

A reduction in Thattham Festival could allow more resources (time and funding) for Thattham Family Fun Day which attracts larger attendance and a wider range of ages and receives 20% and 10% of Officer time (respectively).

5 Legislation

Local Government Act 1972, s145 – Provision of entertainment and support of the arts.

6 Reference to Council Plan

Objective Three: To enhance the sense of community within Thattham.

7 Consultation

All Officers have been consulted to obtain an understanding of their perception of Thatcham Festival and the impact it has on them.

An online survey was issued following Thatcham Festival 2018 to gain feedback from participants and visitors (details contained in Jennie's report, item 5a).

No consultation has taken place with regard to delivery of future Thatcham Festivals.

8 Recommendation

That, with effect from Thatcham Festival 2019:

- i. That Council reviews the Aims of Thatcham Festival
 - ii. That Thatcham Festival be restricted to 9 days (Saturday to Sunday inclusive)
 - iii. That the reliance on Officers for delivery of Festival events be reduced and events be assessed accordingly at the time of acceptance of participants
 - iv. That attracting a greater demographic be a priority
 - v. That a proportion of Thatcham Festival resources (Officer time and funding) be reassigned to Thatcham Family Fun Day for the 2019/20 budget and beyond.
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