

Agenda item number: 6

Date of meeting: 19th November 2018

THATCHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Recreation and Amenities Committee

Report by: Georgina Curtis-Read

Job Title: Community & Civic Administrative Officer

Subject: Review of Thatcham French Market

1 Purpose of Report

To provide details of the inaugural Thatcham French Market jointly organised by Thatcham Town Council and France at Home, which took place in The Broadway on Saturday 8th September 2018.

2 Background of Event

In October 2017, Muriel Charles, manager of France at Home, called into the Town Council offices on her way back from running a French Market in Newbury. She enquired about holding a market in Thatcham on a Saturday in the Autumn. Georgina advised she would need to enquire about closing the car park with West Berkshire Council and will get back to her.

West Berkshire Council agreed to the car park closure and the date was set as Saturday 8th September.

It was agreed that France at Home would pay Thatcham Town Council £300 and supply banners and corex advertising boards, but due to the logistics of them being located in France they requested that the Town Council physically put the advertising up for them. They also supplied a PDF poster which the Town Council posted on social media and across the towns noticeboards. At the end of July the Community & Civic Administrative Officer commenced with her town centre businesses mass mailshot in regards to Fun on the Broadway which gave her the perfect opportunity to inform the town centre businesses about the upcoming French Market as well and to include a poster about the market in that mailout which she witnessed many businesses displaying in their windows. The Town Clerk approved a budget of £30 for a Facebook sponsored post. The post received 1.3K interested clicks and multiple shares to other event sites including Penny Post and Evensi.

3 Report on Event

On the Friday afternoon two Officers based themselves in the Broadway and coned off the car park as the Friday market traders exited. This worked very well and the French market manager confirmed that there were no vehicles parked when they came to set up Saturday morning. One officer returned early Saturday morning to collect the cones which the French traders had conveniently stacked in one place. The Mayor officially opened the event at 10am alongside Muriel Charles and after giving a short speech in French posed for several photos for the Newbury Weekly News photographer. The Broadway Green and the closed car park were packed with stalls including French onions, olives, saucisson, Provençal lavender, soaps, handbags, belts, crepes, artwork and tarts. There was a vintage music seller who played quintessentially French tunes which added to the atmosphere and a stall with huge frying pans, cooking massive garlic prawns and other dishes. The showcase stall was the baker who took up the semi-circle end with his ovens, baking fresh bread and pastries. Unfortunately the cheese seller had been unexpectedly ill and was unable to make the trip this time.

One officer reports the market being very busy at 10am. A Councillor reported it was very busy at 12.30pm and another Officer drove past at 5pm as the market was closing and reported there were still members of the public looking around.

Feedback Received

The French Market was very well received. There was a great atmosphere in the town and lots of people posting on social media about what they had purchased.

The following was posted on the Town Council's Facebook page:

"Had a great time down at the French Market today it is a wonderful idea, enjoyed the music, smells and food hope we can have it again how about a Christmas Market we need to promote Thatcham if Newbury cannot or won't do it let Thatcham have a go please. And thank you mo"

"The smell of garlic cooking is mouth-watering."

One town centre business emailed the Mayor with the following:

"Dear Madam, I'd like to say what a fantastic French market you and your fellow Councillors arranged truly great market the heart of Thatcham came alive it even made many of Thatcham's shops busy as well, Please, Please arrange more like this or even a Christmas French market first time in years myself and my wife heard so many people saying what a fantastic job you all had done on bringing this market to Thatcham again hold your heads high well done."

4 Finances

Total Income £300
Advertising expenditure £30
Officer 1 lieu time 1.5 hours
Officer 2 lieu time 0.75 hours

5 Publicity

The event was promoted via a paid Facebook advertisement. Press releases were issued, the Town Council's website utilised and posters displayed in local businesses and on the Town's noticeboards. Corex boards and a banner were supplied in advance by France at Home.

6 Evaluation

The French market manager reported on a very successful market from their point of view and they would love to return to Thatcham. They are proposing April 2019 to coincide with school Easter holidays.

A good relationship has been forged between the Town Council and France at Home. Muriel was very easy to work with and was quick to answer queries via email. The coning off of the area the evening before was effective and would suggest we do that again.
