

FOR PUBLICATION

REVIEW OF TOWN CENTRE EVENTS PROGRAMME (L000)

MEETING:	1. EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR LEISURE, TOURISM & CULTURE 2. CABINET
DATE:	1. 10 APRIL 2014 2. 6 MAY 2014
REPORT BY:	HEAD OF REGENERATION
WARD:	ALL
COMMUNITY ASSEMBLY:	ALL
KEY DECISION NUMBER	394

1.0 **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 To review the programme of town centre events in light of the revised town centre budgets, and to establish principles for future events.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 To endorse the continuation of an events programme to attract footfall and make the town centre more attractive and vibrant.

2.2 To approve the principles outlined in paragraph 5.1 that support the delivery of a town centre events programme.

2.3 To approve the revised Christmas lights display in the town centre.

2.4 To delegate the approval of an annual programme of events to the Head of Regeneration in consultation with the Executive Member for Leisure Culture and Tourism.

3.0 **BACKGROUND**

3.1 The budgets allocated to organising events in Chesterfield town centre are for Town Centre Entertainment, Festival and Christmas Illuminations. The total budget available for organising events was just over £80,000, including central costs.

3.2 **Town Centre Entertainment**

This budget provided Bank Holiday Markets and other town centre events such as the Well Dressing, entertainment in support of Love Your Local Market and the Day of Dance.

3.3 **Festival**

This budget was set up to organise the Chesterfield Arts and Market Festival but was later changed to fund the Community Arts Festival and the Market Festival.

3.4 **Christmas Illuminations**

This budget included the purchase, erection and dismantling of the Christmas lights, purchase of the main Christmas tree in the town centre and the organising of a lights 'Switch-on' event.

3.5 These events were organised by staff within Tourism, Markets and the Venues. Following phase 1 of the Regeneration restructure, all town centre events will come under the Tourism, Museums & Events service and it is anticipated that, within phase 2 of the restructure, some dedicated resources will be allocated to the delivery of town centre events.

3.6 As part of the Council's budget savings for 2014/15, in response to the reduction in central government funding to local authorities, it was agreed that a recurring saving of £30,500 on town centre events should be made. Consequently, future events programmes will be delivered within a budget of approximately £50,000.

4.0 **CURRENT SITUATION**

4.1 There are currently a number of pressures on town centres nationally, including low shop vacancy rates, out of town shopping centres such as Meadowhall and the increase in online shopping and click and

collect services. To compete with these pressures, Chesterfield town centre must be attractive and vibrant and events are one way of providing this.

- 4.2 The Council's current financial situation presents additional pressures and any events programme must perform well to increase local and visitor footfall in order to generate income for the local economy. Although these event impacts are less easy to measure, they can be assessed through car parking figures, visiting coach numbers and anecdotal evidence.
- 4.3 Cultural and Visitor Services works closely with Destination Chesterfield on their Incubation Street campaign, part of which is to encourage more local residents and visitors to support Chesterfield town centre. The 2013 Christmas marketing campaign, which promoted the town as a destination for shopping, events and entertainment. Their subsequent research showed that this campaign generated an estimated spend of £900,000 into the local economy and demonstrated the importance of an events programme.
- 4.4 The recent refurbishment of Chesterfield Market Hall provides new opportunities in terms of events. The Market Hall is performing well in terms of occupancy rates and this offer can be enhanced through events and entertainment inside the building to increase footfall.
- 4.5 The programming policy at the Venues has resulted in more high profile and West End shows such as 'Joseph' and 'The Mousetrap'. Rather than concentrating high impact shows in the few days of a Festival, the new programming policy is offering these shows throughout the year. This is an obvious improvement which negates the value of an Arts Festival so it was agreed by Cabinet that the Community Arts Festival should no longer take place.
- 4.6 The Tourism, Museums and Events Service is going through a restructure. Once the new structure is in place, the Service will be more suited to working with the Town Centre Operations service and to focus on increasing footfall and enhancing the visitor experience. An events programme has an important part to play in this.

5.0 **FUTURE PROGRAMME**

- 5.1 It is recommended that any future events programme in the town centre should seek to fulfil the following objectives to maximise the

budgets available and help tackle the pressures currently impacting on the town:

- Raise the profile of Chesterfield as a destination to shop and visit.
- Enhance the shopping experience.
- Increase footfall and spend in the town centre.
- Add to the vibrancy and vitality of the town centre.
- Compete with other shopping destinations.
- Increase dwell time in the town centre.
- Ensure that events are accessible to all.

5.2 **Enhancing Existing Markets**

5.2.1 Monday is a regular market day and markets are held on Easter Monday, Spring Bank Holiday Monday and August Bank Holiday Monday. These markets are combined with Table Top Sales to increase the offer and, whilst they are popular dates for both the market and the town centre stores, they are not representative of Chesterfield's regular market offer. Only a small proportion of licensed traders attend these events.

5.2.2 It is proposed that the Bank Holiday Markets will continue to take place with the Table Top Sales, supported by a smaller but free entertainment programme such as face painters, characters (Jeffrey the Giraffe from Toys R Us, Gullivers, etc) and other town centre events including trips up the Tower of the 'Crooked Spire'. Any money saved could be allocated to other market events within the programme.

5.2.3 A market is also held on May Day and this event is supported by a rally and gala, all of which is organised and promoted by the TUC.

5.2.4 Saturday is a popular market day which could benefit from entertainment to increase the vibrancy of the town centre. It is proposed that the budget of £3,440 normally allocated to Bank Holidays is diverted to provide a programme of Summer Saturday entertainment. This would support more licensed traders by increasing footfall to the Market. This option has been endorsed by the traders who have agreed to contribute £2,000 towards this programme from their promotions levy.

5.3 Speciality Markets

- 5.3.1 ‘Love Your Local Market Week’ is a national campaign organised by the National Association of British Market Authorities. It is supported by Chesterfield and designed to attract both new traders and shoppers. As part of the town’s participation in the event, it is proposed that an entertainment programme is provided throughout the week, in conjunction with offers to attract new traders.
- 5.3.2 Chesterfield Medieval Market is a recognised annual event that is well attended and attracts high numbers of visitors and coach parties. As the event takes place on a non-market day, all stall rents and other income, including the fun fair fee, pays for the entertainment and promotion. Consequently, it is proposed that this event continues to take place and opportunities will be explored on how other non-market days can best be used as event dates.
- 5.3.3 Due to the work on the Market Hall, Continental markets have not taken place in Chesterfield recently. It is, however, proposed that we work with providers to host Continental markets in the future. These must complement the existing traders and increase footfall. It is proposed that these will take place in future on High Street rather than Low Pavement. This will cause less interference with the licensed traders but will still enhance the atmosphere of the town centre.

5.4 Market Hall Events

- 5.4.1 There are two aspects to events in the Market Hall – those taking place in the mall and events in the Assembly Rooms.
- 5.4.2 Events in the mall could include Summer Saturday entertainers programmed to perform inside the Hall and in the Market Place. The Market Hall also makes an ideal location for ‘indoor events’ such as Chesterfield Cake Competition, the display of the Johnson’s Paint Trophy and the school traders competition. It is proposed that, in future, the dressing of Chesterfield’s well will take place in the Market Hall. All these events will increase footfall through the Market Hall.

5.4.3 It is also proposed to organise events in the Assembly Rooms. These could include a Food Fair, Craft Fair, etc which would attract income from those renting stalls at the event. These would be self-financing and add to the retail offer of the town.

5.5 Chesterfield Market Festival

5.5.1 This event takes place over 3 days during the Derbyshire schools' October Half Term, and is a popular Festival. It includes a series of events to support the Thursday Flea Market and the General Market on Friday and Saturday. It attracts higher car parking figures and visiting coaches and, consequently, it is proposed that this event is continued.

5.5.2 The licensed traders support the Festival and are confident that it attracts footfall into the town centre. As with the Summer Saturday programme, they have also agreed to contribute £2,000 towards the development of this event from their promotions levy.

5.5.3 In the past, this event has focused on the outdoor market, but it is proposed that future Festivals will incorporate a programme of activity in the Market Hall.

5.5.4 The Festival benefits from other town centre events during the 3 days it is taking place, including Chesterfield Ghost Walks (which are self-financing from ticket sales) and trips up the 'Crooked Spire'.

5.6 Christmas

5.6.1 In 2013 the Chesterfield town centre Christmas illuminations display and switch-on event cost £55,330. Although the switch-on event attracts large crowds and the lights display enhances the town centre environment, it is difficult to assess the direct economic impact of the event.

5.6.2 Such a large expenditure on a discretionary service is not sustainable in the long term, given the pressures on the Council's budget, due to the reduction in central government funding. It is, therefore, suggested that a programme of changes are implemented and that sponsorship is sought to help support the cost of the event.

- 5.6.3 It is proposed that future displays will focus on the core shopping areas – New Square, Market Place, High Street, Burlington Street, Rykneld Square, Low Pavement and the lower part of Glumangate. In order to reduce the cost of the erection and dismantling of the Christmas lights, it is suggested that the supporting wires, power supply cables and mounted fittings remain in place in some of the secondary shopping areas such as Corporation Street, Soresby Street and the Shambles.
- 5.6.4 Sponsorship will be sought to pay the £5,000 cost of buying, transporting, erecting and dismantling the real Christmas tree in New Square, as well as carrying out health and safety checks. If this is unsuccessful, there is an option to instead install a 10 metre artificial blade tree, which was previously located in Rykneld Square. It is proposed to continue the ‘Switch-on’ event but reduce the entertainment programme.
- 5.6.5 These proposals will result in a saving of just under £17,000. Any sponsorship gained will enable the event to be enhanced.

5.7 Other Events

- 5.7.1 Well Dressing is an ancient custom unique to Derbyshire and it attracts both domestic and overseas visitors to the county from May to September. Chesterfield Well Dressing raises the profile of the town and attracts footfall and visiting coaches. It involves both the dressing of the well in the Market Hall and the display of the finished dressing on the Town Pump, which adds colour to the town centre. A well dressing is also displayed at the Parish Church. It is proposed that this event continues to take place in September.
- 5.7.2 Chesterfield Ghost Walks are popular events that take place during the Market Festival (to benefit from the publicity surrounding the event) and are self-financing through ticket sales, so will continue as they currently do.
- 5.7.3 Guided walks through the town centre are arranged as part of the annual Chesterfield Walking Festival in May and include the Art Trail and Murder Walks, as well as the Ghost Walks.

These walks are cost neutral so, again, will continue as they do now.

5.8 Opportunities to develop the events programme will be considered as they arise and their viability will be assessed both against the proposed objectives outlined in paragraph 5.1 and the cost of delivering the event.

6.0 **CONSULTATION**

6.1 The programme of events are discussed at regular intervals with both the Market Traders Consultative Committee and the Chesterfield Town Centre Forum.

7.0 **EVALUATION**

7.1 It is proposed that all future event programmes are monitored and evaluated by comparison of car parking figures and numbers of visiting coaches attracted to the event. Although footfall figures are collected annually in the town centre, unfortunately, they cannot be used to assess the direct impact of the event programme.

7.2 Face-to-face customer satisfaction surveys do take place annually at both the Museum and the Visitor Information Centre. In future, these will incorporate questions to help assess the impact of events.

8.0 **FINANCES**

8.1 The available budget in 2014/15 is as follows:

Town Centre Entertainment	3,440
Festival	10,072
Christmas Illuminations	37,520
Total	51,032

8.2 In addition, the licensed traders have committed a sum of £4,000 to support the events programme, in particular the Summer Saturdays and the Market Festival.

8.3 Although this represents an overall reduction in the budget of £30,500, the proposals contained in this report would result in a programme of events that meet the objectives outlined in paragraph

5.1. Income and sponsorship will be sought wherever possible to enhance the programme.

9.0 **RISK MANAGEMENT**

Description of Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating Action	Resultant Likelihood	Resultant Impact
Events not supported by market traders	M	H	Consultation to take place with market traders	L	L
Town centre footfall is reduced	L	M	Promotion of events through social media, website and advertising	L	L
Expected income not achieved	L	M	Dedicated resource allocated to developing events	L	L
No sponsorship obtained	M	H	Pursue all possible sponsorship options but programme can be delivered within budget	L	L

10.0 **EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EIA)**

10.1 A preliminary EIA has been carried out on the proposed town centre events programme and because there are no negative impacts on any of the equality groups, a full EIA is not necessary.

11.0 **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED**

11.1 The Council could decide that, in future, a programme of town centre events does not take place in Chesterfield. However, one of the aims of the Council's Corporate Plan is to attract more visitors to the borough, and the aims of the town centre events programme align with this objective.

12.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

12.1 To endorse the continuation of an events programme to attract footfall and make the town centre more attractive and vibrant.

- 12.2 To approve the principles outlined in paragraph 5.1 that support the delivery of a town centre events programme.
- 12.3 To approve the revised Christmas lights display in the town centre
- 12.4 To delegate the approval of an annual programme of events to the Head of Regeneration in consultation with the Executive Member for Leisure Culture and Tourism.

13.0 **REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 13.1 The events programme supports the Council's priority of attracting more visitors to the Borough.
- 13.2 To support the events programme through income and sponsorship with the aim of making more events self-financing.
- 13.3 To provide a mechanism for approval of the events programme in order to meet publicity deadlines in external publications.

You can get more information about this report from Alyson Barnes (01246 345775).

Officer recommendation supported/not supported/modified as below or Executive Member's recommendation/comments if no officer recommendation.

Signed

A Serjeant

Executive Member

Date

10 April 2014

Consultee Executive Member/Support Member comments (if applicable)/declaration of interests