

REPORT TO:		Communities and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee	
DATE:		30 October 2019	
PORTFOLIO:		Cllr Paul Cox – Deputy Leader – Environmental Services	
REPORT AUTHOR:		Steve Riley – Executive Director (Environment)	
TITLE OF REPORT:		Review of Town Centre Events 2018/19	
EXEMPT REPORT (Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A)	No	Not applicable	
KEY DECISION:	No	If yes, date of publication:	

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update the Communities and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee around the 12 month event programme following the Town Square refurbishment.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee to note the report and make any comments.

3. Reasons for Recommendations and Background

- 3.1 Before the start of the financial year 2018/19, officers were allocated a budget of £80,000 and asked to identify a variety of organisers who could help deliver a 12 month calendar of unique events across the new Town Square, commencing September 2018. Members requested that all events would be required to meet 1 or more of the following objectives;

- To increase footfall/visitors to the town centre.
- To engage with people who live in and around the Borough.
- To create events for the widest possible audience.
- That event's should be accessible to attendees of all abilities.
- To demonstrate value for money and maximise the event outcomes.

- 3.2 Event proposals were scored and ranked using a weighted scoring system by the Council's Business and Marketing Co-ordinator and Cllr Clare Cleary, the Portfolio Holder with responsibilities for the town centre at the time. This system assessed the organiser's capacity, event manageability, planning, which objectives would be met and also on the event's ability to appeal to a wide audience with unique offerings.

- 3.3 During the 12 months, most event providers demonstrated their ability to meet the Council's expectations. However, a small number required greater support than expected. Unfortunately, five events had to be postponed or cancelled due to weather conditions or lack of capability by the event organiser to safely manage the proposed event.
- 3.4 Under the terms of the contracts, 50% of each grant was held back until the Council received a post event report. This provided details such as the number of attendees and the objectives they set out to meet, costs etc. and are used for assessing future event proposals. There were a number of events which were hugely successful, which officers would be happy to support in the future. These included;
- Fairy-tale Trails which received great feedback from attendees and were successful in engaging users with town centre businesses.
 - The Bus Festival was a surprising success and the Soap Box Challenge was also hugely successful. These events confirmed large scale unique events not only bring people into the town centre but also engages local businesses.
 - Easter Eggstravaganza was another huge success, indicating that residents are receptive to interactive community type events.
- 3.5 There were other events that were not initially successful. These included;
- The Handmade & Fairtrade Markets were not very successful in attracting multiple traders but were hugely successful in engaging with hundreds of families by offering free crafting opportunities.
 - The Fairy-tale Trails did not prove popular with showing films but far more popular when the event offered gymnastic workshops.
- 3.6 There were additional Civic events added during the year, such as the 100th Remembrance Event and Town Square Opening and additional costs in maximising event outputs and ensuring public safety, such as; Crowd Control Barriers, Barrier Covers, Gazebo's, Picnic Blankets, Branded Pens totalling £6,400, Print Advertising and Facebook totalling £2,388 and Traffic Management totalling £10,175. As these were not included within the original event budget, they had to be accommodated by reducing costs on events and drawing down on some funding from the 2019/22 budget. However, some items like the barriers and the gazebo's will be used again at future events.
- 3.7 If event registration was a requirement, the numbers attending were easier to ascertain but where this was not possible, officers and event organisers estimated the number of attendees. Officers estimated that during the 12 month programme, an additional 90,000+ visitors have visited the events in the town centre.
- 3.8 The gathering of standard information from each, allowed for events to be assessed on size, audience numbers, funding provided etc. The headlines for each event are shown below;

Small Events – Total cost £7,012

- 11 Handmade & Fairtrade Markets, free children's crafting, fruit and storytime - 1,625 people took part
- 3 History Walks around Accrington - 15 people took part
- Flash mob - 300 people took part
- 3 Fairy-tale Trails - 1,408 people have taken part

Medium Events – Total costs £22,650

- Bus Festival - 3,000 attendees
- Chocolate Festival - 2,000 attendees
- Theatre on the Square - 161 people took part
- Culture & Heritage Festival - 2,000 attendees
- Brass Band Concert - 300 attendees
- Move & Glo Festival - 855 attendees
- Accrington's Biggest Circus - 491 attendees
- Father's Day Motorcycle Event - 3,000 attendees
- Ron Hill 10k & Fun Run - 2,000 attendees

Large Events – Total Cost £60,235

- Dickensian Night - 4,000 attendees
- Accrington Music Live - 7,000 attendees
- Food Festival - 14,000 attendees
- Rally Challenge held at Accrington College - 6,000 attendees
- Soap Box Challenge - 9000 attendees
- Easter Eggstravaganza - 5000 attendees
- Fantastical Forest Parade - 6,000 attendees
- Accrington Town Square Grand Opening - 2,000 attendees
- 100th Remembrance Sunday - 10,000 attendees
- Pop Party - 2,000 attendees
- Accrington's Biggest Quiz - 120 attendees

3.9 Following the initial £80,000 of funding for 2018/19 and due to their success, the Council has allocated a further £110,000 to deliver more unique events on the Town Square from September 2019 until March 2022. The allocation of this budget will be based on a number of presumptions;

- Successful events from the first year can be repeated and will also include a number of wider cultural events such as Chinese New Year and Eid.
- Support a number of "national days" such as Industry Day and Apprentice Day.
- To supplement the calendar with a number of large events that promotes Civic Pride such as a 'Summer Spectacular' and a 'New Year's Eve Street Party'.
- To introduce special interest events such as a 'Bus Festival' and a 'Hog Festival'.
- To support event organisers in making their events self-funding.

3.10 Feedback from event attendees and post event reporting information submitted by organisers, have provided officers with a benchmark for what is required to deliver successful events, examples of which include;

- A better understanding around the types of Small, Medium and Large events that are popular and considered a success by attendees and local businesses.
- Support events that increase/direct footfall inside the Market Hall.
- Support events that promote 'Civic Pride' and the 'Wow Factor' and also trial more night time / seasonal events.
- Support events that promote/involve businesses in Accrington and the Borough.
- To not only target local residents but promote events to a wider East Lancashire audience.
- Low cost of attendance to the user/attendee.

3.12 In addition, there is now a greater understanding of the capabilities of the event organisers; the effect a variety of marketing channels has on an event, have access to a growing number of volunteers and Accrington ambassadors and a better understanding of what the Borough's residents respond to. Officers have also acknowledged a number of complaints citing a lack of event advertising, something which will be address by a greater emphasis on the use of Social Media for all future events.

4. **Alternative Options considered and Reasons for Rejection**

4.1 Update report to Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee only.

5. **Consultations**

5.1 With Portfolio Holder.

6. **Implications**

Financial implications (including any future financial commitments for the Council)	N/A
Legal and human rights implications	N/A
Assessment of risk	N/A
Equality and diversity implications <i>A Customer First Analysis should be completed in relation to policy decisions and should be attached as an appendix to the report.</i>	N/A

7. **Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985: List of Background Papers**

7.1 None

8. **Freedom of Information**

8.1 The report does not contain exempt information under the Local Government Act 1972, Schedule 12A and all information can be disclosed under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.