

COUNCIL EVENTS UPDATE

AGENDA ITEM No. 7

MEETING: EVENTS SUB-COMMITTEE

DATE: 5TH OCTOBER 2022

REPORT BY: HEAD OF LEISURE AND EVENTS

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of the report is to provide Members with an update on the Council's community events programme for 2022/23.

2.0 Background to the Report

2.1 The Council provides an annual programme of events which includes Fun in the Parks, Santa Tours, Fireworks Display and Senior Citizens' Trips.

2.2 Please note that the Senior Citizens' Trips are subject to a separate report.

3.0 Current Situation (By Event)

3.1 Fun in the Parks

It was resolved at the last meeting that:-

- i) The traditional programme of eight Fun-in-the-Parks events be provided in 2022.*
- ii) One of the eight events to be larger and held in the Town Park.*
- iii) An additional budget of £5,000 to be made available from the Covid Recovery Fund for the Town Park event.*

The Fun in the Parks events took place during the summer holiday period.

The events have been extremely well received this year, to the point of being too well attended for the equipment and attractions in each park.

There have been long queues for all attractions in most parks, with some queues wait time being over an hour. The reason for this could include the cost-of-living crisis, the first year without Covid restrictions, the extremely good weather conditions for all parks and an overly successful marketing campaign.

Face painting remains a problem area.

This year a system of time slots was brought in at the first park, but there were not enough time slots, even though there were three face painters on site. Staff were verbally abused by people not being able to get a ticket. This was compounded by people failing to turn up for the time slot and bringing more children to slots than originally stated. This will need to be addressed in 2023.

One possible solution could be to allow face painters to charge a small fee for the service. This way the face painters would manage their own workload, and it would also release the funds the council has paid for face painters for other attractions. In 2022 this cost was £1,860.

Alternatively, a retainer could be paid to the face painter to cover travel costs, which would reduce the cost of face painting to the public. If the same amount of face painters were used as in 2022 the saving would be £1,310, which could be used on another three attractions at other parks or be retained as a saving to the budget.

It is estimated that the first event in the Town Park on 27th July attracted in the region of 4,500 to 5,000 people. This trend continued with all parks having higher numbers than usual.

St Oswald's Park on 29th July was themed as the Teddy Bears Picnic. The weather forecast was due to rain, but this never materialised. The event was slower to start as people waited to see if it would rain but it is still estimated there were more than 1,600 attendees.

Woodham Park on 3rd August was the Adventure Park. The age range for the events was raised to 9 to 13 years, with den building, survival skills and nature crafts in the wooded area. The treasure hunt proved extremely popular with staff having to return to the office for more trails to be printed. It is estimated there was in the region of 2,500 to 3,000 attendees at this event.

Next was the Animal Theme event at the Oak Leaf Sports Complex. This event is always well received with children being able to have donkey rides, visit the petting zoo, interact with the camel race as well as all the other attractions. The event proved so popular that the public were trying to access the site prior to its opening, while contractors were still trying to set up. Approximately 2,500 to 3,000 people attended this event.

During week commencing 8th August the Fun in the Parks went to Moore Lane Park and Horndale Park. This was the week when temperatures reached the mid-30's.

Moore Lane was the circus themed park. Again, the event was extremely busy from the very start with big queues forming before the event started. Another piece of equipment was brought in at short notice to help with the very long queues which formed very early as people were trying to miss the afternoon heat. It is estimated around 1,750 to 2,000 endured the heat to come to this event.

At Horndale Park with the good weather the event was moved the lower field, leaving the top area near the MUGA to be used as a car park. The heat proved a problem with people trying to find shade in open park land. Again, it was very busy early on, but did quieten down as temperatures reached mid 30's. It is estimated that in the region of 1,000 to 1,250 people attended this event.

At Aycliffe Village, part of the events area was opened as a car park to try to ease parking in the residential areas. The event was busier than in previous years, with approximately 500 to 1000 people attending the event. The size of the site and access restrictions limit the attractions which can be brought onto this site.

At Simpasture Park, the event brought in approximately 1,500 people. This being the last of the events, extra equipment was brought in. The extreme hot weather conditions caused issues for staff, contractors, and users, as there was little shelter to be found. Consideration could be given to the purchase of a couple of inflatable marquees, gazebos or sails which could provide shelter for users in such conditions in the future. These range from around £35 for a 2.7m by 2.7m to over £1,000 for a larger structure.

3.2 Skate Fest

The Skate Fest event did not take place this year as the professional company who provide the skaters were not available due to ongoing health issues. Officers are trying to open dialogue with the company again to see if the event could potentially take place in 2023.

3.3 Big Brass Bash

This event is a festival run by Durham County Council in July each year across County Durham and as part of this festival an individual event is usually booked and held in the Town Park, funded by the Town Council. The 2022 event held in the Town Park was very well received with a good crowd turning out on the night.

As agreed at the last meeting, officers attempted to book a 'Little Brass Bash' event to take place in Aycliffe Village but were unable to secure a date.

To date there is no information has been received from DCC regarding the events for 2023. Officers will inform the sub-committee when communication is received from Durham County Council for the 2023 programme.

3.4 Fireworks Display

Planning for this year's Fireworks Display event is well underway. To ensure the event comes in on budget the fireworks display time has been reduced due to significant increases in import costs. Officers have been informed that these costs are likely to increase again in 2023 due to the cost-of-living crisis.

One option the Council could explore is to try and find a sponsor for the event so there would be no extra cost to the Council for the additional costs of the fireworks. The other costs for the event should stabilise in 2023 due to the Council becoming self-sufficient for items it would usually hire in e.g., barriers and lights.

3.5 Santa Tours

Planning for this year's Santa Tours event is underway. Officers are currently looking for more volunteers to drive and navigate the tours. The reserve lists have been exhausted.

Again, the Council could consider trying to find a sponsor for each route to reduce the cost of this event. Each route would be advertised with a sponsor and the sponsor would donate £100 to the costs of the route; this would generate £1,200 if all routes could find a sponsor.

3.6 Santa Letters

Approximately 250 children write to Santa each year. The planning for Santa letters is well underway, and the small gift to be given to every child has been purchased.

Consideration could be given to try and seek letter box sponsors for a donation of £25 per box, which would cover the cost of the small gift issued with every letter.

3.7 Queen's Platinum Jubilee Celebrations

The Queen's Platinum Jubilee Picnic event was very well received by the public, with many families enjoying a night of free entertainment at the Oak Leaf Sports Complex playing fields to mark the occasion.

3.8 75th Anniversary of Newton Aycliffe

A full report on the 75th Anniversary of Newton Aycliffe was taken to the Full Council Meeting on 27th July 2022.

This report highlighted details of the early plans being made ahead of the 75th Anniversary in 2023 and Members were requested to provide feedback and guidance to officers on the ideas put forward and agree a broad itinerary and budget for the celebrations.

It was resolved at the meeting that:

“The Council scale back the 75th Anniversary plans working on a principle of the Council holding one event similar to this year’s Queen’s Jubilee Event using the existing Large Community Events Budget, (£10,000 remaining Budget), one lasting commemoration of the anniversary e.g. a sculpture or new woodland which can be funded from the Capital Budget, and then everything else being undertaken in partnership with other organisations and at no cost to the Council – beyond the usual grant and donation requests”.

Members of the Events Sub Committee are therefore asked to confirm at this meeting that they wish for officers to begin preparations for an event similar to this year’s Queen’s Platinum Jubilee Event this year, and also how they wish to see the anniversary permanently commemorated e.g. via the commissioning of a sculpture or the planting of a new woodland.

Officers are also continuing to work with Durham County Council’s Community Cultural Development Co-ordinator in developing a project to create a historical exhibition of photographs and memorabilia. This project will involve working in partnership with Durham County Council Archives, Newton Press, local residents and possibly Beamish Museum. It is anticipated that the exhibition could be put on display at various locations including the Council Offices, Town Centre, community centres, churches etc.

The Corporate and Policy Officer has already started work on this project and has already obtained some very interesting historical documents and memorabilia.

The Council may be able to access some funding from Durham County Council to assist with this project and discussions are underway about a possible bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (at no cost to the Council in match funding).

Depending on funding and assistance from Durham County Council Culture Department the project may be able to be extended to include the creation of a book or video recording from all the information and memories.

Officers are also progressing plans with other organisations for projects and events at no or limited cost to the Council and ideas being worked on include:-

- Possible Royal Visit (in partnership with the Pioneering Care Partnership, Newton Press and Veteran’s Hub);
- Go Well formerly ‘Sedgefield Schools Partnership’ in relation to a possible 75th Anniversary themed sports competition as 1948 was also the year that London hosted the Olympics;
- Ayclife Music Festival;
- 75th Anniversary theme to Annual Fireworks Display;
- Community Walk possibility of a 75-mile challenge with several community walks organised during the summer; and
- A book of remembrance to be opened for local people to record their memories of the 75 years of the Town.

3.9 King Charles III Coronation

Members may also wish to consider if they would like to host any events when the Coronation of King Charles III is announced. Officers would recommend purchasing Union Jack Flags (none themed) for the lamp posts in the Town Park. The Council already has a stock of flag holders and therefore it is only the flags which would be required. These items should be purchased in advance as when celebrating the Queen's Platinum Jubilee items were in short supply. Estimated cost for twenty flags is £725.00 plus VAT.

4.0 Impact on Great Aycliffe Town Council

- 4.1 Members are asked to consider the information provided regarding the Council's programme of events and provide feedback and guidance to officers on the proposals made.
- 4.2 The Council also needs to bear in mind that events require a considerable lead in time to organise, are often subject to the availability of external contractors, and that many contractors are now requesting some level of advance financial commitment or deposit when securing dates for bookings.
- 4.3 There is now a potential financial risk and implication, should the Council decide to proceed with an event, that when bookings are made with advance deposits paid, and then the event is subsequently cancelled, particularly bearing in mind the confirmation from the Council's insurers that cover is not currently available for cancelled events.

5.0 Policy Implications

- 5.1 Consideration of this report will assist the Town Council with the delivery of the following Strategic Aims:

No.1 To provide good quality governance and management of the Council.

No. 2 To manage the Council's finances and assets in a responsible manner.

No. 3 To provide accessible, affordable leisure facilities and opportunities.

6.0 Staffing Implications

- 6.1 Council events will be planned, organised, managed, and overseen by the Head of Leisure and Events with support from the Clerical Events Assistant, Works Department and other Council staff as required.

7.0 Financial Implications

- 7.1 The Council has a £40,000 Community Events Budget for the 2022/23 financial year.
- 7.2 As highlighted earlier there is a new financial risk in relation to the fact that a number of providers in the events and hospitality sector are now requesting an advance deposit when securing dates for bookings which will mean that there will now be some level of financial commitment for the Council should be event be later cancelled, particularly bearing in mind the confirmation from the Council's insurers that cover is not currently available for cancelled events.
- 7.3 The expected outturn on the £40,000 Large Community Events Budget for 2022/23, based on current commitments, is as follows:-

Cyclocross	£230 (cost of works overtime)
Cyclocross December event	£230 (2 nd event cost of works overtime)
Food Festival	£1,000 (approved grant)
Big Brass Bash	£6,500 (actual cost)
Queen's Platinum Jubilee	£5,248 (actual cost)
Tri Golf	£0 (but indirect cost of buy one get one free)
Christmas Extravaganza	£1,000 (grant requested)
Ayclive Music Festival	£10,000 (approved grant)
Total	£24,208

7.4 There is currently a remaining uncommitted balance of £15,792 which would provide resources for any other Council organised events, and any further requests for financial assistance received from local community organisations.

7.5 Should the Council wish to purchase flags for the Coronation from the Large Community Events Budget, they would be able to purchase these from the 2022/23 budget using the underspend.

8.0 Crime and Disorder Implications

8.1 There would always be the possibility of large gatherings of people at any Council run community events, particularly where these take place in a public place such as a park. Large gatherings of people would be very difficult to control, and this may breach COVID-19 regulations if these were reintroduced in the future.

9.0 Equal Opportunities Implications

9.1 Most community events are open to all. However, the Senior Citizens' Trips are limited to a smaller 'age related' group of residents i.e., over 60's.

9.2 The Fireworks display is only open to residents.

10.0 Environmental and Climate Change Implications

10.1 There are several climate change implications for the various events, for example transport emissions to run the coaches for the Senior Citizens' Trips and the air borne emissions from the Fireworks Display.

10.2 These climate change implications have not yet been quantified pending a Council decision around the Council's approach to calculating its carbon footprint and how this is to be resourced.

11.0 Risk Assessment

11.1 It is not considered that the matters contained in this report pose a risk to health and safety of staff or to the financial or public standing of the Council to a degree that a risk assessment should be appended to this report.

12.0 General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR)

12.1 Is any personal or sensitive data required for this proposal which may have any implications for GDPR?

NO

13.0 Recommendations

13.1 It is recommended that Members receive the report and consider the update provided regarding the Council's programme of events, provide feedback and guidance to officers on the proposals made in relation to each event and make recommendations to the Recreation Committee on any agreed actions in relation to the following issues: -

- i) 3.1 – Advise officers of how the sub-committee wishes to proceed with the ongoing issues with face painting at the Fun in the Parks events;
- ii) 3.1 – Advise officers if the sub-committee would like officers to bring a further report forward advising of the costs of providing shelter structures at the Fun in the Parks;
- iii) 3.4 – Advise officers if the sub-committee would like officers to try and find a sponsor for the Fireworks Display in 2023/24;
- iv) 3.5 – Advise officers if the sub-committee would like officers to try and find sponsors for Santa Tours routes for 2022/23 or 2023/24;
- v) 3.6 – Advise officers if the sub-committee would like officers to try and find sponsors for the Santa letter boxes in 2022/23 or 2023/24;
- vi) 3.9 – Advise officers if the committee wish for officers to purchase the reusable flags for the King's Coronation.

Responsible Officer

Judith Thexton
Head of Leisure and Events