

Culture, Leisure & Recreation

Date:	3 December 2013
Title:	Community Events
Purpose of the Report:	To consider the role of the Town Council
Contact Officer:	Cassie Pinnells, Community Services Manager

Background

Thame hosts numerous community events and in the past few years the number has increased to include the Food Festival, Thame Arts and Literature Festival and Music in the Park.

It is not unusual and perhaps not surprising, that the Town Council is called upon for support at various levels of involvement. The demand is now quite significant and sometimes the expectations of the event organisers are not met because the level of support cannot be provided because of other work pressures. Likewise Council work programmes are sometimes put on hold whilst staff are heavily involved in organising events.

The Council also provides public liability insurance for some of the events which ultimately leaves the Council with the overall liability and yet it may not have been instrumental in assessing risks or health and safety.

The purpose of this report is to explore the options for the future so as to assist with resource planning, identifying the role and responsibility that the Council will assume and as a guide for any enquiries from the community about organising new events.

Community Events

The Council currently assumes overall responsibility for the fairs, Remembrance Service and the Lights Switch on at Christmas. The level of involvement in other events is indicated below:

		Insurance	Staff Hours (Recorded)	Equipment	Other Support (e.g.Free Use, Grants)
March	Tidy Thame	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	40	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
May	Music in the Park	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	319	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
June	Carnival	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	149	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
September	Fair				
September	Food Festival	x	4	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
October	Fair				
October	TAL	x	4	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
November	Remembrance Service				
December	Lights Switch On				

The number of staff hours offered to those events not under the direct management of the Council is somewhere in the region of 516 hours which equates to one staff member working on events for 14 weeks of the a year at 37 hours a week or about £8000, this time is mainly operational support.

In letting an event operate under the umbrella of the Council's insurance the level of risk being carried by the Council on each event varies depending on what activities are organised and the understanding and willingness of the event organisers to take on the responsibility for Health & Safety.

To date there have been one or two near misses but this arrangement is not one that should continue and with that in mind the Committee is being asked to consider the approach to take in supporting community events.

Options

Assuming the Council's role is to help facilitate community groups/individuals organise community events rather than be involved long term in the organisation or the management committee. Notwithstanding that individual councillors may wish to be involved themselves or be a nominated representative on the management committee but this should not lead to any Council resources being used unless within allocated staff work programmes.

To meet a facilitation role the Committee is asked to consider the following options:

Option 1 – To continue as the arrangements currently operate leaving the Council open to a high level of risk and increasing levels of staff time.

Option 2 – To continue the current arrangements but assign staff time to ensure all health and safety aspects of any event not fully under the control of the Council, meet a standard acceptable for the Council. This would impact on other work programmes.

Option 3 – To facilitate community groups to organise events using a two or three year programme of support.

Year 1 – assist interested individuals to recruit and form a management committee and stage an event using the umbrella of the Council's insurance.

Year 2 – provide some administration support to the constituted management committee from year 1 to stage the event again and in addition grant funding to cover the cost of its own public liability insurance.

Year 3 – Have a watching brief as the management committee forms a "trust" and takes on full responsibility for the event and pays for its own public liability from proceeds held over from the event in year 2. Alternatively if money is not raised the Council could consider providing a grant to cover the cost of insurance.

Option 3 offers the benefits of:

- providing the organisers of a community event with a clear timetable for its own independence
- the community helping itself rather than expecting the Council do everything for it
- evidence that an event is sustainable and still supported locally
- a sharing of experience and support for new initiatives

- best use of council resources without being overwhelmed by demand or having to increase resources beyond current provision
- opportunity to provide or arrange training for such groups and staff that would assist in the organising of such events.

Risk Assessment

The following areas of risk management are of real concern if the current approach for organising community events is not addressed.

Event Insurance claims	High
Financial Implications (Event loss, VAT)	Low
Damage & Injury	High
Staff/Volunteers Safety	High
TTC Equipment Failure/Loss	High
Equipment Failure	Low
Road Closure/Traffic Management	High
Breach of Licenses	High
Complaints	High
Corporate Negligence	High
Contract Management	High
Impact on Council Priorities Projects	High

Resource Appraisal

Dependant on option to be applied.

Legal Powers

The Council has the power but not a duty under:

- Local Government Act 1972, section 145, power to promote entertainment and the arts
- Local Government Act 1972, section 144, power to encourage tourism

Neighbourhood Plan Objectives:

- Working & Shopping - Support Thame's shops objective are supported by all the community events.
- Environment & sustainability – Improve existing open space - Music in the Park

Recommendation:

- To approve Option 3 as the approach to be taken in supporting community events.***
- To assume overall responsibility for the fairs and Remembrance Service.***
- To work with the Carnival and Music in The Park committee to achieve independence by the end of 2014.***
- To try and establish by 2015, a Management Committee to take on the responsibility for organising the Christmas lights event.***