

Community, Leisure & Recreation Committee

Date:	02 April 2019
Title:	Town Awards 2019
Contact Officer:	Lizzie Fuller, Community Project Officer

Purpose of the Report

To provide an update on the 2019 Town Awards and to consider changes to the 2020 Awards.

Background

1. The Town Awards were introduced not only to recognise those within the parish who have made an outstanding contribution but also to promote the whole ethos of community involvement. The first awards were presented in 2009.
2. The Awards Panel consists of 9 members who represent businesses, churches, schools, the Citizens Advice service, community, sports clubs and emergency services and includes the Chairman of the Community, Leisure and Recreation Committee and the Town Mayor.

Publicity

3. Social Media, including Facebook and Twitter, have been used to publicise the Town Awards and this together with the ability to complete online nomination forms has proved a great success in encouraging people to get involved with the process. Articles have also appeared in the Thame Gazette, Chiltern View, and on the Town Council's website and weekly electronic newsletter. Posters were displayed in numerous shop windows as well as on the Town Council's noticeboards and A-board. Advertising boards were placed at town entrances, on the Montesson Square railings and on the Town Hall planters, and the pull-up banner was displayed in the Town Hall. Panel members also handed out leaflets during the nomination period.

Nominations

4. The questions on the nomination form remained the same as last year as the panel felt this improved the quality of the nominations received and, hence, enabled them to make an informed decision.
5. A total of 62 valid (plus 26 invalid) nominations were received (up from 54 last year) for 42 different individuals / organisations, of which 76 were online and 12 in person.
6. This year 5 nominations were received for Thame Town Council staff members. The panel considered these nominations as part of the scoring process but felt it was not appropriate for them to be chosen as the winner. The panel therefore recommended that any future nominations made for Town Council staff would be void, as per Councillors and Panel Members, which would be outlined the terms and conditions.

Categories

7. The categories for this year's Awards were; Lifetime Achievement, Sporting Achievement, Volunteer of the Year, Service with a Smile, Creative Arts Achievement and Employer of the Year. The latter category was introduced following recommendation from this committee last year and support from the Thame Business Forum.
8. The panel were once again impressed with the quality of nominations received in all six categories and awarded a winner for each.

Awards Ceremony & Timelines

9. The winners were invited, together with members of their family, to a presentation evening at Thame Barns Centre where the Town Mayor presented the Awards. The individuals who nominated the winners of each category were also invited to attend the awards ceremony. This worked well to increase numbers at the event and make it more of a community event.
10. The awards ceremony took place in March this year due to the elections in May. Since 2015, the awards ceremony has been held in either March or May annually. Every four years the Town Awards are impacted by purdah / elections, which subsequently increases the workloads of Officers. Between 2009 and 2014 the awards were held in July as part of the annual Civic Reception. In 2015 this was changed and the Town Awards were presented at the Annual Town Meeting in March. Although successful, incorporating the Town Awards with the Annual Town Meeting in the long term was not ideal and the following year the Town Awards became again a 'stand alone' event held at the Barns Centre at the beginning of May.
11. This committee is asked to consider changing the date of Town Awards ceremony to July from 2020 onwards, to:
 - a. Prevent the impact of elections / purdah on the Town Awards and associated workload pressures on Officers in future years;
 - b. Enable the awards to take place when the evenings are light and the weather is typically better, and therefore use the outdoor space at the Barns Centre;
 - c. Provide an appropriate opportunity to present the Mayor's cadets with their medals;
 - d. Assist with action plan timeline to obtain sponsorship. As the 2019 Town Awards fell during the Christmas period it conflicted with the Light Switch-On sponsorship requests.
 - e. Ensure that the whole Town Awards process from initial award publicity through to the costs of the ceremony are all self-contained within one financial year.
 - f. Ensure that every Mayor is able to present the Town Awards during their Mayoral year (though for one year only, in 2019/20, the Mayor will not have this opportunity if the date is changed to July).

Resource Appraisal

12. Two Town Awards ceremonies have taken place in the 2018-19 financial year.
13. A report on Town Awards 2018, as presented in May 2018 was presented to the Committee on 10 July 2018. This showed a £1,640 underspend against the special 10th anniversary budget (£2,500) plus the £600 sponsorship received.
14. The 2019 Town Awards (total cost of around £1,100) as presented in March 2019 were funded entirely by that 2018 underspend. The clash with Christmas precluded sponsorship approaches.

15. The request for a standard budget in 2019/20 (£1,000) for the Town Awards was approved at the Full Council meeting on 22 January 2019.
16. Any excess of funds at year end (which in the past has also often included sponsorship received in advance) is transferred into a reserve (currently standing at £870) to help fund the following year's event.
17. A decision will be taken as part of 2020-21 budget setting and/or 2019-20 year end processing as to whether the unspent £1,000 budget for 2019/20 will be transferred into the reserve at 2019-20 year end. If all is contained within a financial year it may be sensible to discontinue the use of a reserve and budget each self-contained year accordingly.

Legal Powers: The Local Government Act 1972, Section 145

Recommendation:

- i) To note the report*
- ii) To change the date of the Town Awards ceremony to July from 2020 onwards*
- iii) To change the Terms and Conditions to prohibit Town Council Officers from being nominated*