

Community, Leisure & Recreation Committee

Title:	Taste of Thame & Thame Art Crawl
Date:	18 July 2023
Contact Officer:	Cassie Pinnells, Community Services Manager

Purpose of the Report

1. To update the Committee about the proposed future of the Taste of Thame and Thame Art Crawl events, previously coordinated by the Market Town Coordinator role, that ceased to exist in October 2022. To seek Committee approval to continue delivering these events in house and approve the associated use of officer time to do so.

Background

2. From November 2016 until October 2022, Thame Town Council employed a Market Town Coordinator (MTCO) to support the vitality and vibrancy of the town centre. As part of this role, in an effort to boost footfall to the town centre and into businesses within the town, the MTCO set up both Thame Art Crawl (running for 6 years) and Taste of Thame (running for 2 years).
3. Thame Art Crawl: this event runs during a week in October, and previously complemented the Thame Arts and Literature Festival (TAL) that ran at the same time. It works with 25+ businesses who all host a pop-up art exhibition in their windows – each featuring a different artist. As well as boosting the opportunity for residents to engage with the visual arts, the vision for the event was also for people to also find out more about the other businesses in their town – and potentially discover something they had previously not been aware of or visit a business they had previously not visited.
4. Taste of Thame arose from an idea brought to Thame Town Council by The Deli at No 5 who used to be based in The Buttermarket. This event promotes the food offer on Thame's doorstep featuring over 20 town centre venues and many food producers based within 5 miles of the town, or with a pre-existing connection to Thame. The event includes 'The Buttermarket Banquet' – a shared table for the community to gather around; a producers market with live demonstrations; a street food market, and a food trail taking people to different venues around the town to watch demonstrations, pick up tasters and take part in workshops. A raffle raises funds for Thame Food Bank, and a cafe raises funds to support Ukrainians living in our community, who have been displaced as a result of the current conflict there.
5. Both events have been delivered as part of our partnership with 21st Century Thame – allowing us to use their insurance and bank account, as well as to easily engage with volunteers who have come forward to support it. Both events are currently fully funded by sponsorship, with every possibility that sponsors will continue to fund it into the future.
6. Both events are successful with businesses, as well as Thame Library and Thame Museum (who are both part of the events) reporting an increase in footfall, and often an increase in average sales.
7. Taste of Thame requires a road closure through the Buttermarket and around the Town Hall, and outside of Market House, where disabled parking is located. Thame Art Crawl requires no road closure.

Proposal

8. Although the MTCO role has come to an end, there is strong feeling that the events should continue to be delivered - especially following the recent end of Thame Town Music Festival, and the historical movement of Thame Food Festival to the show ground. The need for events that draw people to our town centre is more necessary today with the economic challenges facing our town centre businesses. In order for this to happen, alternate resource will have to be dedicated to the events within the Thame Town Council staff team. With the start of the Communications and Events Officer role, this is possible.
9. The proposal is that the Community Services Manager takes on the responsibility to deliver these two events over the next year, allowing her to fully learn how the events are run, and engaging members of her team, as needed to support the successful delivery of the events. After this period, the events will be reviewed, in line with the development of Thame Town Council's strategic plan, so that a decision can be made about if and how to continue to deliver them successfully.
10. For this to happen the following commitment will be needed:
 - a. The Community Services manager will take over the chairing of each of these events, running regular meetings with the team of volunteers who are currently part of the delivery team, supporting them to achieve their tasks.
 - b. Relevant action will be delegated within the Community Services team as relevant.
 - c. The financial management of the events (currently delivered through 21stCT bank account) will be brought into Thame Town Council's finances – with relevant income and expenditure codes being created.

Risk Assessment

11. A full risk assessment and event management plan are in place for each event and will be updated as needed.

Resource Appraisal

12. Following the review of Taste of Thame 2023, there could be a need for external security services to be engaged to support the road closure, and there is definite need for first aid support. Sponsorship will be sought to cover these costs if they are deemed to be necessary, however there is some financial risk to Thame Town Council to cover these costs should additional sponsorship not be achieved. This would be to a maximum of £1,500.

Recommendation:

The Committee is asked:

- i) To approve officer time to support the delivery of both events for the next year.*
- ii) To approve £1,500 be allocated to cover the costs of delivery if needed, as a last resort if sponsorship cannot be achieved.*