

CABINET - 13TH AUGUST 2020

Report of the Head of Leisure and Culture Lead Members: Councillor Jenny Bokor and Councillor Shona Rattray

Part A

ITEM 7 OPTIONS FOR THE 2020 LOUGHBOROUGH REMEMBRANCE PARADE, LOUGHBOROUGH FAIR, LOUGHBOROUGH CHRISTMAS LIGHTS SWITCH ON AND TOWN HALL PANTOMIME

Purpose of Report

This report discusses major Loughborough events during the remainder of 2020 and seeks support for proposals for alternative delivery or cancellation of these events.

Recommendations

That:

1. The delivery of Loughborough Fair in its current format should not proceed for 2020.
2. The 799th year of the Royal Charter Fair will be celebrated with a few children's rides and food stalls along with an opening ceremony, commissioned in a Covid-secure manner, to reflect the importance and history of the Royal Charter Fair.
3. The Loughborough Remembrance Day event should go ahead without a parade and in a revised format with additional social media/virtual elements.
4. The Loughborough Christmas Lights switch on event be cancelled but the usual Christmas lights display be erected alongside a Special Christmas Market.
5. The Town Hall Pantomime be cancelled and rebooked for 2021.
6. Alternative uses for the Town Hall auditorium be considered for the 2020 pantomime season.

Reasons

1. The safety, economics and management issues are too great to make Loughborough Fair viable or safe in its current format.
2. To uphold the Royal Charter Fair by staging an alternative and appropriate event to celebrate its rich history and heritage.
3. The management of large numbers of people attending a parade, many of whom will be from more vulnerable groups, means safety cannot be ensured. A small service, with social media support, will enable the event to go ahead in a different format.
4. To avoid a large number of people coming together at a specific time (lights switch on) a Christmas market, lit by the festive lights, will provide an alternative option with visitors and activity spread across several days.
5. It takes months rather than weeks to organise the Town Hall Pantomime, preparations made to date will contribute to the delivery of next year's pantomime. A decision to cancel the Pantomime in August will prevent any further expenditure being committed in the next few months.

6. With the seating retracted the space in the auditorium can support a range of financially viable shows and events that are in line with Government guidance.

Note in all cases the Council is considering these options with regards to our ability to meet the Covid Secure Guidance relative to the event or activity under consideration.

Policy Justification and Previous Decisions

The Council has a duty to consider the Coronavirus (COVID -19) guidance in all its decision making in relation to planned events and activity. Specific guidance in relation to the above events includes:

Keeping workers and audiences safe during COVID – 19 in the outdoor event industry in England

Operating safely during COVID – 19 Performing arts returning to training, rehearsal space and performance

Public places – urban centres, green places.

The Recommendations set out above provide an alternative way of delivering the Councils event programme and objectives set out in the Councils Corporate Plan while meeting current Government Guidance.

The Council's Corporate Plan sets out to increase tourism and support initiatives to help our towns and villages to thrive. In addition, under Every Resident Matters, the Corporate Plan sets out to celebrate the rich culture of the Borough.

Implementation Timetable including Future Decisions and Scrutiny

The recommendations for alternative Remembrance Day, Loughborough Fair and Christmas Lights events will be implemented immediately. Discussion is ongoing about alternative events at the Town Hall but work to cancel the pantomime will begin immediately.

Report Implications

The following implications have been identified for this report.

Financial Implications

Last year Loughborough Fair generated income of £99.4k against a budget of £93.7k delivering an overall profit of £12k taking into account all attributable costs. With this small profit margin, it is unlikely that all the additional costs required to deliver the traditional Fair while supporting social distancing could be realistically delivered. The event proposed for 2020 will act as a symbol of the Fair and will have limited associated costs.

Going ahead with the Christmas light switch on and Remembrance Day Parade in their normal format would (apart from breaching COVID 19 Secure Guidance) involve increased costs due to measures needed to protect the public.

The alternative proposals that avoid large gatherings in one particular area put forward for the Christmas lights switch on and Remembrance Sunday can be delivered within the current budgets or at a reduced cost.

The delivery of the Panto is not economically viable if the current Government guidance is in place. Costs already incurred in staging a pantomime this year can largely be carried forward to 2021.

An alternative use of the Town Hall auditorium will be designed to be self-financing or to deliver a profit before it is approved.

Risk Management

The risks associated with the decision Cabinet is asked to make and proposed actions to mitigate those risks are set out in the table below.

Risk Identified	Likelihood	Impact	Overall Risk	Risk Management Actions Planned
Failure to manage the events in line with Government Guidance. would still not ensure that the events in the current format could be managed in accordance with Government Coronavirus (COVID -19) guidance.	Unlikely (2)	Significant (2)	Low (4)	Cancellation of event or alternative delivery of an event set out in the recommendations above will reduce the numbers attending to ensure social distancing measures are feasible and can be put in place.
Reputational – changes to events are not managed or communicated appropriately.	Unlikely (2)	Serious (3)	Moderate (6)	Consultation with key stakeholders on the likelihood of specific events and the development of plans based on consultation.
Decisions taken at a late stage due to detailed government guidance being available at the time.	Unlikely (2)	Serious (3)	Moderate (6)	Decisions taken in a timely fashion based on the current information available.
Financial liability– costs or charges incurred by the	Unlikely (2)	Significant (2)	Low (4)	Ensure contract position is known and managed, a compromise to be

Risk Identified	Likelihood	Impact	Overall Risk	Risk Management Actions Planned
Council due to cancellations.				negotiated if necessary to ensure all parties are in agreement with cancellations.

Key Decision: Yes

Background Papers: None

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Part B

Background and Proposals

1. Summary table of event proposals

Event	Proposal
Loughborough Remembrance event	Event to go ahead with no parade on a much smaller scale with the use of social media to capture a limited service, and traditional activities including the placing of wreaths and the cascade of poppies from the balcony of the Carillon Tower.
Loughborough Fair	Loughborough Fair is celebrated in 2020 with the operation of a small selection of children's rides, food stalls, and an opening ceremony commissioned to reflect the importance and history of the Royal Charter Fair.
Loughborough Christmas Lights switch-on	Cancellation of this year's event to be replaced with the lights being installed and being on in advance of a Special Christmas market that will take place over several days.
Loughborough Town Hall Pantomime	Cancellation of this year's pantomime so that it can be deferred to 2021. Head of Service to be tasked with alternative use of auditorium space to attract income and provide a Christmas boost to the local economy at no additional cost.

2. Loughborough hosts a number of annual events which are managed by the Borough Council. This year, the Covid 19 Pandemic will impact four key events in Autumn / Winter 2020. These are:

- Loughborough Remembrance event - 8th November 2020
- Loughborough Fair - 11th to 14th November 2020
- Loughborough Christmas Lights switch on - 29 November 2020
- Loughborough Town Hall Pantomime

3. Whilst these events are still a few months away, all are usually in planning early in the year. The situation with the Pandemic is uncertain, with the likelihood of social distancing measures continuing, and the possibility of further localised, or wider, outbreaks occurring also impacting the area. A decision about the staging of these events is needed in a timely way to address public safety, financial implications and protect the Council's reputation, and to focus time and resources on delivering worthwhile, enjoyable and safe alternatives where possible.

4. All the major street or open space events in the Borough are discussed at one or more Event Safety Advisory Group (ESAG) meeting(s). An ESAG meeting was convened recently to discuss the street events in the light of the Pandemic. The ESAG includes Charnwood BC officers (including a Health and Safety

representative), representatives of the emergency services, the Highway Authority and promoters or organisers of the event(s). The ESAG meeting is normally chaired by the Head of Leisure and Culture.

5. The ESAG raised a number of concerns about proceeding with the three street events in the current uncertain circumstances. These include the large numbers of people attending, the location of the events (in that they are not contained within an area to which entry can be controlled), the resulting issues with enforcing social distancing, evacuation of any area in the event of an emergency, the ability of the emergency services to respond to events given other urgent calls on their time due to Covid-19 issues.
6. Each of the street events involves a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order which has a standard lead-in period for legal processing. The deadline for submitting this year's requirements is imminent. The legal Order carries a cost, and the drawing up and enforcing of the details of the Order is also a charge on Council resources.
7. Loughborough Fair
 - i. Issue - Loughborough Fair attracts income for the Council through rental for pitches, but there is also a cost in delivering the event. This year, initial discussion with the Showmen's Guild has indicated that approximately 50% of operators are not touring at present, and are not likely to do this year, thus reducing possible income. In addition, enforcing social distancing for this event would greatly increase the Council's costs and the level of stewarding needed would not necessarily be welcomed by the public. In addition, Government guidance for Fairground operators has not yet been issued.
 - ii. Issue - A smaller event or alternative site has been considered but each of these would involve levels of planning and financial commitments which cannot be supported.
 - iii. Issue – emergency evacuation of such a major event would be extremely challenging with social distancing measures in place.
 - iv. Issue – The Fair is dependent on the support of a wide range of services across the Council as well as the emergency services. At this point in time it is difficult to predict if these services would be available due to the impact of COVID – 19.
 - v. Issue – The Fair occupies all of the available public space when in town apart from a narrow walkway between the rides and the shops. Due to the current social distancing measures in place to support town centre retail and hospitality the space outside premises required for queue management would not be available.
 - vi. Proposal – Loughborough Fair in its traditional format should be abandoned this year because of the safety and financial considerations of a large event with uncontrolled access. An event involving a small number of children's rides and food stalls with an opening ceremony

commissioned to reflect the importance and history of the Royal Charter should be delivered in its place.

8. Loughborough Remembrance Day Parade

- i. Issue - Loughborough Remembrance Parade is delivered by Charnwood BC with advice and support from the local Royal British Legion (RBL). We await national guidance from the RBL on this year's events but the indication to date is that a more modest ceremony is likely to be recommended, especially given the higher numbers of older people attending the events. Some of the groups who take part in the parade element have already said that they will not be attending ceremonies this year.
- ii. Issue - the Remembrance Parade takes place in Queen's Park and Loughborough Town Centre, with additional personnel parading along Burton Walks from the Grammar School. Whilst some support in crowd handling has previously been provided by the RBL and local Armed Forces or Cadet contingents, the RBL nationally have recently indicated that they advise against RBL members providing support of this nature. The cost of the event is borne by Charnwood BC and may be likely to involve additional charges given the stance of the RBL and the need to ensure social distancing.
- iii. Proposal – the Loughborough Remembrance event should be delivered to a smaller scale so that a ceremony, which is valued by so many members of the community, can still take place but numbers be limited so that social distancing can be maintained. Elements such as the prayers, playing of the Last Post and the cascade of poppies from the Carillon Tower can still take place and it is planned to show the ceremony on social media. Official wreaths can be laid, and arrangements put in place for members of the public to lay their wreaths in a socially distant way. We will have other online content to include to make the day relevant to our communities.

9. Christmas Programme and Lights Switch On

- i. Issue - The Christmas Lights switch on in the Market Place has been recently delivered by Charnwood BC with an element of financial support from Loughborough BID. The BID have indicated that they are not able to provide this support this year so the event would potentially need to be reviewed aside from any Covid 19 considerations.
- ii. Issue - the event attracts upwards of 15,000 people in a small space and cannot be adequately controlled in terms of social distancing in its usual format. Additional costs would be attracted to ensure enforcement of Government regulations.
- iii. Proposal - the Christmas Lights switch on should this year be part of a special four-day Christmas Market, for which we already have guidance. To reduce the risk of large numbers of people attending a switch on ceremony, the lights can be turned on earlier in the day via a social media

event and people attending the market can enjoy an enhanced display over a longer period.

10. Christmas Pantomime

- i. Issue - the Loughborough Town Hall pantomime presents significant difficulties to deliver in the usual way. Maintaining current recommendations for social distancing would involve costs to set up (i.e. removing seats and making the area safe) and the numbers which could then be accommodated would be significantly reduced, making the pantomime unprofitable.
- ii. Issue - costs already incurred in staging a pantomime this year can largely be carried forward to 2021, and it would be possible to store Little Wolf's props for next year, giving some welcome support to the company.
- iii. Proposal - The Loughborough Town Hall pantomime should be deferred to Christmas 2021 and the Head of Leisure and Culture tasked with looking at alternative uses of the Auditorium space to attract income and provide a Christmas boost to the local economy.

Consultation

11. Consultation has taken place with the Emergency Services and the Highways Authority through the Event Safety Advisory Group for all of the events in question. Whilst they are supportive of the events, as usual, they expressed similar concerns to Council officers about the uncertainty regarding the Covid-19 Pandemic and its effects, and the need to plan adequately for revised events.
12. Specific consultation has taken place as follows:
 - i. With regard to the Remembrance Parade, consultation has taken place with the Loughborough Branch of the Royal British Legion, the DMRC Stamford Hall, Loughborough Parish Church and the Army Reserve Centre.
 - ii. With regard to Loughborough Fair, initial consultation has taken place with the representative of the local branch of the Showmen's Guild and the emergency services.
 - iii. With regard to the Loughborough Christmas Lights switch on, consultation will take place with the Loughborough BID and Market Traders.
 - iv. With regard to the Loughborough Town Hall Pantomime, consultation has been ongoing during the year with the Pantomime company, Little Wolf.

Financial Implications and Considerations

13. Loughborough Fair

- i. While contracts to support the Fair are in place, e.g. for traffic management and stewarding, no orders have been placed to date and the administration of the event has been put on hold.
- ii. A decision to abandon this year's event is now necessary to avoid any financial commitments and to allow the Showmen where possible to make alternative bookings. To confirm arrangements for an event to capture and mark this year's Fair through children's rides, food stalls and historically important ceremony.
- iii. The Fair overall makes a small net profit, this year we expect to make a small loss based on previous years' results.

14. Remembrance Day Parade

- i. The same contracts to deliver the Fair are in place to deliver the Remembrance Day Parade and it is important that clarity is provided to the companies involved as well as all of the different communities that are involved in the annual parade and service.
- ii. While a Parade is not planned, and budget savings could be possible alternative costs are likely due to the need for virtual activity.

15. Christmas Lights Switch On.

- i. This event is usually delivered in partnership with the BID, who amended their budget earlier in the year to support business through direct intervention and cancel their event programme. The alternative event (e.g. a Special Christmas Market supported by activities that are bookable in advance) will look to the support of key town centre stakeholders and partners to ensure the event can be delivered at no additional cost to the Council.

16. Pantomime

- i. Due to the lead in time required for the development of the pantomime at the town hall, work has already been in progress to ensure a pantomime would be ready if the situation allowed. A plan has also been in place to defer this year's pantomime if necessary, to 2021 to ensure that any advanced budget commitments can largely support the delivery of next year's pantomime.
- ii. When the auditorium seating is retracted a very large space can be made available for a range of bookable events that would be designed to cover all costs and when possible generate additional income.
- iii. This project will be delivered within existing budgets available.