

ECONOMIC GROWTH, ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY) COMMITTEE

24 NOVEMBER 2020

PRESENT:

Councillors Leytham (Chairman), Ball (Vice-Chair), Warburton (Vice-Chair), Binney, D Ennis, Gwilt, Ho, A Little, Marshall, Parton-Hughes, Ray, Robertson and S Wilcox.

(In accordance with Council Procedure Rule No.17 Councillors Cox, Eadie, Lax, Smith and A. Yeates attended the meeting).

Councillor B. Yeates attended the meeting as Chairman of the Regulatory & Licensing Committee to give views to aid the Committee.

14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

15 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Gwilt declared a pecuniary interest as he stated that he worked as a street trader along with carrying out work on events at Lichfield based venues. He consequently observed the meeting but did not partake in the debate.

Councillor D Ennis declared a personal interest as he stated that he had worked with businesses in Chasetown to help organise events in the area.

16 DRAFT EVENTS AND FESTIVALS POLICY

The Committee received a report on the draft Events and Festivals policy informing them of the results of consultation. It was reported that the aim of the new policy was to facilitate the continued delivery of high quality, well run events and festivals in Lichfield District, to ensure they are well managed, add to the economic growth of the district and are enjoyable for all. Members noted that the policy was intended to deliver on the recommendations made in the Bournemouth University report commissioned by the Council in 2018. It was noted that, in total, 31 people/organisations completed the questionnaire, in addition 5 separate responses were received by email. It was noted that event organisers had contacted Members directly. The Committee was also asked for its views on the draft policy for the Deputy Leader and Officers to consider along with all representations before finalising the document.

The Committee agreed that a 'single point of contact' approach as outlined in the draft policy would be beneficial for event organisers especially those that were newer, smaller and/or more community led. It was confirmed that the intended policy would not supersede the Street Trading Policy or the role of the Regulatory & Licensing Committee and these elements would remain in place. It was reported that largely, it was the process that would change and expressions of interest to hold events be considered by a working group of Officers from all relevant areas and then the Cabinet Member before formal full applications were submitted.

It was agreed that the definition of an Event as currently drafted was not clear enough and should be clearer. In response it was stated that Events would be outdoor only, that were open to the public, involved consented activities or requiring a road closure and that this would be re-written in the final version of the policy. It was suggested that as part of the policy

statement there should be reference made to encourage events in other areas outside Lichfield City.

Exemptions to the policy were then discussed and it was noted that street parties, street sports events and parades would not be covered. There was much debate regarding traditional and civic events and it was requested that such local events, for example, the Greenhill Bower and the City Council's Pancake Race be assumed to be taking place and those dates automatically reserved in the events calendar. It was reiterated that as stated in the draft policy commemorative parades would be exempt however but to presume dates for other events was not appropriate as this could effectively undermine the policy approach. It was hoped that a dialogue could continue with Lichfield City Council to find the best way to continue these such events. It was suggested that different strands or level of event be considered alongside the aforementioned high level 'Strategic' ones which are reserved and that these would not necessarily need the Council's involvement at all for example village hall fairs. It was confirmed that indoor events would not fall within the policy but could be advertised on the Visit Lichfield website.

Application timescales were discussed and there was concern that for an organiser, 28 days to hear whether they had been successful could be too long and there could be a risk of them choosing another area to hold their event. In response it was stated that the expressions window would be open for 28 days and officers would assess those applications received half way through the window to ensure they were complete then at the end of the period, officers would meet and move the process on quickly to ensure organisers knew what had been agreed and could plan accordingly. Over time it was hoped that event organisers would understand the disciplines required with the policy in terms of submitting applications in good time and with the requisite details required for assessments to take place.

Members were pleased that a budget had been reserved to help event organisers set up new local events and it was hoped that this would encourage more events outside the Lichfield City area. It was agreed that the Policy should be as simple as possible to encourage newer event organisers to hold different and varied events in the district.

There were concerns on the need to know the financial viability of an event organiser and understood that there had been issues in the past where events were cancelled last minute due to financial issues and it left the Council having to deal unexpectedly with matters arising as a consequence. Some Members felt that the weighting given to that assessment criteria was high and should only be used if the Council was uncomfortable. It was also questioned as to whether the assessment itself should attach any kind of weighting when it would seem this was more a yes/no answer. In response to a question in this context about who any contract would be it was confirmed that there would not be any contract with organisers through this events policy. Hire of the Council's own park land and any associated fees and charges would be dealt with separately and after the initial filtering process.

The role of local businesses both in terms of being involved in events and being affected by them was discussed. It was stated that it was hoped to have local businesses have a greater involvement in events and wished for this to be facilitated through discussions with event organisers and at least offered the opportunity to participate. Discussions between event organisers and local businesses should also take place to help mitigate impacts

Members asked why there was a rush to consider and adopt an Events Policy at this time when it was unlikely that because of CV19 events could be held for a long time. This was taking up a lot of officer time. In responding the Cabinet Member stated that it was important to be able to plan for when events can take place and hence there was a need to progress with adopting a policy and commencing its implementation.

It was requested that there should be criteria in the policy that required where possible events organisers to pursue local procurement of goods and services. It was also suggested that a

criteria specifically be included requiring event organisers to show how their proposals would contribute to tackling the climate emergency. It was agreed to consider these points further.

The Committee agreed that implementation of any approved policy should be monitored and evaluated on a regular basis to allow for improvements if required. It was also requested that an impact assessment on the Council's costs including Officer time be included as part of this assessment.

- RESOLVED:
- (1) That the comments made in response to the consultation on the draft policy and procedure be noted;
 - (2) That the suggested responses to the key issues raised in the consultation be noted;
 - (3) That the suggested amendments to be made to the draft policy be noted.

(The Meeting closed at 7.55 pm)

CHAIRMAN