

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 attended the meeting).

14 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

15 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

Councillor D Ennis declared a personal interest as 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 contact Members directly. The Committee were also asked for their 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 'one 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 however that it did 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. It was reported that Events would be outdoor only, that was open to the public and requiring a road closure and that this would be re-written in the final version of the policy. It was suggested that there be a statement to encourage events in other areas outside the City.

Exemptions were then discussed and noted that street parties, street sports events and parades would be exempt from the policy. There was much debate regarding traditional and

civic events and it was requested that such “Strategic” events for example the Greenhill Bower and the City Council’s Pancake Race be assumed to be taking place and those dates automatically reserved. It was reported that as stated commemorative parades would be exempt but to presume dates for other events could effectively undermine the policy as drafted. 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 with those high level Strategic ones which are reserved to ones that do not need the Council’s involvement at all for example village hall fairs but could still be advertised on Visit Lichfield as well as more than one held on the same day. It was noted that without an application, if for any reason that Strategic event could not go ahead, the date would be lost as no other organiser would be available. It was agreed however to keep this under review.

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. The feedback was received and noted to be considered further. It was reported that the expressions window would be 28 days and Officers would assess those applications half way through the window to ensure they are complete then at the end of that period, Officers would meet and move the process on quickly to ensure organisers knew what had been agreed and could plan accordingly.

Members were pleased that a budget had been reserved to help new event organisers set up 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 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 liable to deal with it unexpectedly. Some Members felt that the weighting given to that assessment criteria was high and should only be used if the Council was uncomfortable. When suggested, it was reported that there would not be any contract with organisers through this events policy. Hire of park land fees or licensing fees would be dealt with after this.

Impact on businesses in the area on events was discussed and it was felt that they should be supported through the policy especially in these times of uncertainty and it was requested that there be an assessment criteria that would expect the organiser to minimise negative impact on local businesses. It was reported 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.

It was asked why there was a rush to consider and adopt an Events Policy at this time when unlikely to be able to hold events under the current pandemic situation and was taking up valuable Officer time. It was reported that the expression of interest window for 2021 would be open by now and allow organiser to start to plan their events and secure dates.

It was requested that there should be criteria that requested that local procurement be undertaken be included. It was also suggested that a criteria requested how organiser would contribute to tackling the climate emergency should be included and it was agreed to consider these points further.

The Committee agreed that the 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 in this.

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